

Strategic Equality Plan 2016 - 2020



This document is also available in Welsh. Should you require this document in an alternative format such as large print or braille please contact us via:

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Introduction and background

This is Bridgend County Borough Council's second Strategic Equality Plan and covers the period 2016 – 2020.

As a council 'equality' for us means understanding and tackling barriers so that everyone has a fair chance to fulfil their potential. Equality and fairness is at the heart of our day to day business and our Strategic Equality Plan forms part of how we plan and deliver our services. We aim to mainstream equalities legislation into all aspects of our work and the services we deliver and support.

During 2012-2016 some of the key achievements in terms of delivering our equality objectives included:

- working with our Community Safety Partnership and South Wales Police to increase the level of hate crime reporting;
- increasing the numbers of dropped and raised kerbs at bus stops and road junctions;
- implementing a pay and grading system for all employees who are employed under NJC Terms & Conditions;
- developing and introducing sport and leisure activities for disabled people in our communities;
- developing a Bridgend Council LGB & T staff network;
- working with South Wales Police and Bridgend College to develop the Bridgend LGB & T Forum;
- arranging race awareness workshops for children in our primary schools to address issues of bullying;
- developing an effective consultation toolkit enabling us to better engage with our citizens on issues that affect them.

We recognise however that there is further work to be done. This plan will build on what we have previously achieved and learnt to support services being delivered more appropriately and for outcomes to focus on individuals' protected characteristics such as race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, transgender status, pregnancy and maternity, marriage or civil partnership.

We have welcomed and openly demonstrated our commitment to the duty set by the Government and the [Equality and Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\)](#) to ensure equality is mainstreamed in both internal and external facing functions. Tackling institutional discrimination in policies, practices and procedures are core values in delivering our services.

As the council's Leader and Chief Executive, we see equality as a core principle within our roles, and we will continue to strive to provide high quality services to all individuals, residents and employees.



Leader



Chief Executive

1. Overview of Bridgend County Borough and our core functions

Bridgend County Borough is a diverse and vibrant area with 141,214 residents and over three million annual visitors.

We provide a wide range of services in a variety of ways. Some are provided centrally from our main civic offices whilst others are provided from the front-line in our communities, e.g. highway maintenance and care/support at home. Others, such as refuse collection, leisure, libraries and cultural activities are provided by outside agencies or by contractors. As one of the county borough's largest employers and service providers we recognise our unique role and influential position within the area and the contribution we can make to the development of inclusive and confident communities.

2. Equality objectives

How have we decided on our equality objectives? We have:

- reviewed our Strategic Equality Plan 2012 – 2016 and our action plan for this period and considered our achievements such as improving access to services for Deaf and hard of hearing people and where further work needs to be done such as with transportation;
- used the council's new corporate objectives of supporting a successful economy; helping people to be more self-reliant and smarter use of resources to help provide a structure and approach to reviewing our objectives, e.g. 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 eight [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 in respect of civil partnerships and [marriage](#).
- considered national and local issues such as immigration;
- assessed what we have learnt from regional networks and partnerships such as regional approaches to meeting the needs of Gypsy and Traveller families, domestic abuse, violence against women, and 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, e.g. in 2015/16 we consulted on proposals to review our public toilets, waste collection and the council's budget (Shaping Bridgend's Future);
- considered a number of national reports recently produced by the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) such as "Is Wales Fairer?";
- used feedback that we regularly get from local equality and diversity groups and via the Bridgend Equality Forum such as how accessible our services are and how we can help support, promote and raise awareness of issues such as hate crime and LGB & T History Month;

- carried out a consultation and engagement exercise with the public, partners and equality and diversity groups. We asked them for their views on the changes we proposed to make to the objectives set in 2012 and if they felt there were any gaps. 101 people shared their views with us and we have used these views to help shape our final equalities objectives.

Final objectives:

Objective	What we hope to achieve/support?	Why we think this objective is important?
Objective 1: Transportation	We will help to provide an accessible, cost effective, all-inclusive transport network within Bridgend County Borough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation continues to be highlighted as an issue by local disability groups who require reliable and accessible transportation helping them maintain community links and access local facilities. • Progress has been made in this area e.g. increasing the number of raised and dropped kerbs but there is still work to be done around accessible taxis and improving the transport network. • 76% of people agreed with this objective as part of the consultation. Top suggestions included checking compliance, subsidised transport and routes/frequency of buses.
Objective 2: Fostering good relations and awareness raising	We will positively promote a fairer society in the county borough by increasing public awareness of the issues faced by people with protected characteristics and increasing our efforts to help tackle issues such as hate crime and domestic abuse. We will also improve the ways in which we communicate, consult and engage with those who share a protected characteristic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We know that the county borough is becoming increasingly diverse and will soon welcome its first Syrian asylum seekers; • We know from our work with CalanDVS that the incidences of domestic abuse, violence against women and sexual violence is increasing in the county borough and that children can easily become emotional and physical victims; • We know that between April and December 2015 there were 86 recorded hate crimes in Bridgend County Borough and we want to help encourage more reporting to tackle these issues; • We want to involve people and representative groups in planning and shaping services by giving

		<p>them a voice in decisions that may impact their lives;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the council looks to reduce its spending, services are being reviewed and we need to consult and engage with people on many of these changes. We want the views we use that help inform our decision-making to be representative of the people of the county borough. • 83% of people agreed with this objective as part of the consultation. • Some consultation respondents highlighted that even though the original welfare reforms have now been introduced they still felt this was important so we will ensure actions related to that sit here.
<p>Objective 3: Our role as an employer</p>	<p>We will build on our efforts to be an inclusive, supportive employer promoting diversity and equality within our workforce, enabling all employees who have a protected characteristic to fulfil their potential.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We think this is important because the council has a role within the wider community to lead the way on equality and diversity; • Supporting our employees whatever their protected characteristics will help enable them reach their potential; • Many of our employees live within the county borough and raising awareness of equality and diversity amongst them may benefit the wider community. • 73% of people agreed with this objective as part of the consultation. Top suggestion related to more staff training at all levels. • Some consultation respondents highlighted that even though the council has introduced its equal pay framework that equal pay was still important so we will ensure actions related to that sit here.
<p>Objective 4: Mental health</p>	<p>Our Adult Social Care service will build on its partnership work with the third (voluntary) sector to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness of mental health issues will help to reduce stigma; • Accessible services such as drop in centres for people with mental

	provide mental health support and services.	<p>health and substance misuse issues are important so that they can get the support they need when they need it;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of our customers have mental health issues. We want to provide mental health awareness training to our frontline staff so they have an understanding of some of these issues and can support our customers more appropriately; • 86% of people agreed with this objective as part of the consultation. Top suggestion was to support easier and quicker access to specialists.
Objective 5: Children	We will positively promote and support the emotional and educational attainment of children in the county borough and address the issues children face such as bullying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We know that bullying and identity related incidents occur in our schools and we must do all we can to address this. We have an anti-bullying task group in place to assist with this; • We know that the number of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) leaving secondary school is unacceptable and that life expectancy and the opportunity to achieve can be reduced as a result; • Some children in our county borough do not attend school regularly which can prevent them from reaching their full potential. We must work with the families of children such as Gypsies and Travellers, Syrian refugees and other asylum seekers to encourage them to attend and remain within the education system. • 93% of people agreed with this objective as part of the consultation. Top suggestion was to have more training and support for anti-bullying programmes including anti-cyber bullying in schools.
Objective 6: Leisure, arts	We will work with our partners to help to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing participation in affordable and accessible sporting

and culture	promote fair and equal access to participation in sport and recreation services as well as in the arts and culture services to all members of the community.	<p>facilities amongst residents will improve health and fitness levels;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving access to affordable and accessible arts and culture facilities amongst people from all protected characteristic groups will promote inclusion and improve their cultural development in these activities. • 84% of people agreed with this objective as part of the consultation highlighting affordability and awareness of services as the top suggestions.
Objective 7: Data	We will continue to develop systems to collect, collate, monitor and publish equalities data on our service users and employees as well as improve our equality impact assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By collecting and analysing data we can better understand the demographics of our employees and our service users; • We need to be confident that our employment practices are transparent; • We need to be able to identify any gaps in service provision where, perhaps, a particular groups needs are not being fully met; • We will be able to make evidence based, informed decisions on service developments outlined within the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. • 51% of people agreed with this objective as part of the consultation.

In arriving at our objectives, we have kept in mind the overriding purpose of the general duty. This is the requirement to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not;
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3. Strategic Equality Plan action plan

We will develop an action plan to support this plan which will outline:

- the actions we are seeking to progress under each of our objectives which will make a positive difference to peoples' lives;
- when we expect to achieve these actions;
- who is responsible for taking the actions forward; and
- how we will measure our success.

We will use information that has come out of the initial consultation to support the development of our actions. Following the development of our proposed actions to support the objectives outlined within this Strategic Equality Plan we will consult on these actions in the spring of 2016. The action plan will be finalised after this has been completed and added to this plan as an appendix 1.

4. How will our equality objectives help us meet the duties in respect of each protected characteristic?

We believe our objectives will improve outcomes for the protected characteristic groups. Through our on-going work and engagement activity we are aware of priority issues in respect of sex, disability, sexuality and race.

Collecting, using and publishing equality data will help us develop an evidence base on which to make informed decisions.

Race, religion and belief

We have described how we intend to address issues in relation to race, religion and belief within our objectives, particularly in terms of:

- raising public awareness of race, religion and belief related hate crimes and hate crime reporting;
- working with local race and religious groups to help promote awareness of culture and practice;
- increasing the involvement of people from BME backgrounds in local and public life.

Disability

We have addressed disability issues within our objectives, particularly through our commitment in respect of:

- developing a better transportation infrastructure;
- raising awareness of disability issues via awareness campaigns;
- improving our mental health services;
- increasing the involvement of disabled people in sport, leisure, arts and culture.

Gender and sex including maternity and pregnancy

Delivering equal pay for women and men continues to be important for us and, in addition, we have a range of processes in place to ensure our female and male employees are treated fairly e.g. maternity, adoption and paternity leave policy.

Gender and sex is also supported within our objectives under:

- Fostering good relations, particularly around domestic abuse, violence against women and sexual violence;
- Data, as we intend to capture employee equality information to help us identify and address any issues of inequality and
- Children, particularly where we will work closely with families to ensure that both boys and girls regularly attend and remain in the education system.

Sexual orientation and transgender

Between 2012 and 2016 we engaged with transgender people who often experience the most difficult barriers and discrimination in employment, receiving services, experiencing hate crime and in education. We now have a much better understanding of the issues faced by LGB & T people in Bridgend County Borough and have established a closer working relationship with them. To assist us in meeting our equality duties over the next four years we will:

- work with the Bridgend Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Forum to develop support services for LGB & T people such as advice, guidance and signposting to other sources of support such as health and housing;
- work with the council's LGB & T staff network to ensure our work practices are inclusive and to develop a support network for employees (and/or their families) who are contemplating "coming out";
- promote and support local and national awareness raising events such as LGB & T History Month by raising the rainbow and transgender flags.

Age

We will continue to collect age related information for staff and service users and prospective service users. We will continue working towards identifying and differentiating between age appropriate provision and aspects of our functions which may be creating disproportionate outcomes for people of different ages. We will do this by:

- collating and monitoring equality related information (including age) that we gather from public consultation and engagement activities;
- ensuring that the protected characteristic of Age is represented at our Bridgend Equality Forum and;
- monitoring feedback and complaints that we receive from customers and service users.

5. How will we monitor progress of our Strategic Equality Plan objectives?

Successful delivery of our objectives requires strong leadership which is driven primarily by the Cabinet Member holding the Equalities Portfolio and our Head of Human Resources, Organisational Development and Customer Services.

Responsibility for operational delivery rests with all service areas and teams within the authority. Each Corporate Director and Head of Service ensures their employees have the appropriate skills and knowledge of equality that are required. Our Cabinet Equalities Committee monitors delivery against the objectives and scrutinises information available to ensure we identify and implement new strategies and objectives appropriately.

Reports summarising progress against each of the objectives will also be presented to the Cabinet Equalities Committee for consideration.

Our main area of focus in monitoring progress is to undertake further, regular consultation and engagement with all protected characteristic groups. We are mindful that our most reliable measure of success of our equality objectives is via our citizens, service users and employees as it is they that will use our services and be able to tell us where we need to improve.

6. How will we collect and publish relevant equality information?

We are committed to collecting data where it is useful and to use that data in an effective manner to identify where some protected characteristic groups may be experiencing a disproportionate impact or where there may be opportunities to deliver a service/s in a different way. We will collect data on customers and citizens via our consultation and engagement activities and on our employees via our own internal systems.

We will collect and use the following equality data:

- employment profile data in respect of all protected characteristics;
- service user data so that we understand the characteristics of the people who use our services;
- job applicants in respect of all protected characteristics.

This data will be published annually as part of our Strategic Equality Plan annual reporting process.

We recognise that there are limitations to the data we currently have in respect of protected characteristics and the robustness and completeness of data collected particularly in respect of certain characteristics such as sexual orientation, religion and belief and transgender status. These limitations exist because some people do not wish to share their personal information with us. We hope that, in building better relationships with protected characteristic groups in the future, we can build trust and confidence amongst them which will help us to:

- encourage people taking part in our consultation and engagement activities to share more information with us;
- encourage our employees to disclose their sensitive personal data with us and;
- build more robust and complete data on the people we employ and those that use our services.

In addition we will publish annually:

- a list of the Full Equality Impact Assessments undertaken;
- the Strategic Equality Plan action plan and
- the Strategic Equality Plan annual report.

7. How will we assess the impact or potential impact on protected groups?

We are committed to assessing the impact of new and existing policies, practices and procedures on all equality groups by conducting appropriate

equality impact assessments. Our Equality Impact Assessment page is available on the council's website or by [clicking here](#). When conducting equality impact assessments we will:

- collect and analyse relevant data;
- engage appropriately, through involvement and consultation, with people who are likely to be affected by policies and programmes from the start of the development and planning processes;
- provide our staff with training and support to ensure they carry out robust and meaningful equality impact assessments with confidence and knowledge.

In order to assess the impact of our policies and programmes on all protected characteristic groups we will continue to utilise the following information:

- demographic data and other statistics, including census findings;
- survey data;
- equality monitoring data.

We have also produced an Equality Impact Assessment toolkit which is a practical guide for service managers to use to assess the likely impact of their functions, policies and procedures on different groups of people. In addition to publishing our Equality Impact Assessments we have also published this [guide](#) on our website.

Our published EIAs clearly highlight where there is either:

- a positive impact on protected characteristic groups in which case there will be a clear outline of the work to be done to ensure that the impact remains positive
- a negative impact on protected characteristic groups in which case there will be a clear outline of the mitigating work to be done to reduce or remove barriers or a statement outlining why the barrier/s will remain.

8. How will we promote knowledge and understanding of the general and specific duties amongst employees?

Our objectives will include the commitment to continue developing and implementing a comprehensive training and awareness programme for staff in respect of the general and specific duties. We will develop a rolling training programme for the period of this plan.

9. Engagement

Equality is diverse and we need to include people and their representative groups in our planning and decision making processes to help them unlock their potential. We also need to engage appropriately with people to help us meet our duties in the Public Sector Equality Duty in order to:

- set equality objectives;
- prepare and review our Strategic Equality Plan;

- identify how our work and activities may contribute to meeting the general duty;
- assess the likely impact on protected groups of our policies and practices being proposed or reviewed.

We recognise that we need specific processes in place to ensure that the needs of people are taken into account. We use a range of approaches to engage with people, from formal consultation and engagement activities to informal meetings with local groups and individuals.