

Merthyr Tydfil County
Borough Council

**Annual
Equality
Report**
2024-2025



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MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

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Foreword

We are pleased to introduce our Annual Equality Report 2024-2025 for the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028. This Strategic Equality Plan was prepared in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. This is the first report for the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028.

A message from our Equalities Champion, Councillor Gareth Richards

It gives me great pleasure to once again introduce the Council's Annual Equality Report. The Council is required under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 to produce an annual monitoring report on the steps it has taken to meet the public sector equality duty and its own Equality Objectives. Welsh Government was the first government to impose specific duties on public services over and above those required by the Act. The Act places a duty on public bodies to consider how to positively contribute to a fairer society through the delivery of services having due regard to eliminating discrimination.

The Council remains committed to ensuring that everyone within the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil is treated with equal respect and that their individual circumstances are not a barrier to them receiving the services they need from the Council or its partners. The Council will seek to ensure that no one receives less favourable treatment because of possessing a specific protected characteristic. Where it is evident that there is inequality of treatment or outcome, the Council will actively take steps to address such inequality. Our aim is not just to meet our legal duties, but also to make Merthyr Tydfil a place where everyone matters. We want Merthyr Tydfil to be a place where no one experiences discrimination or disadvantage because of their identity or background. The Council sees everyone in Merthyr Tydfil as an equal citizen whilst recognising that people will have different needs.

Through the Strategic Equality Plan, this Annual Equality Report for 2024-2025 is a testament to the Council's ongoing drive to progress its equality agenda and deliver our Equalities Vision for Merthyr Tydfil, which is:

A place where diversity is valued and respected and everyone can participate, flourish, and have the opportunity to fulfil their potential free from discrimination and prejudice.

The Council is working towards delivering this vision through our role as a community leader, service provider, commissioner, employer and working in partnership to reduce inequalities and to improve the wellbeing of the County Borough. It is recognised that there are and will continue to be areas for improvement.

Introduction and Background

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 brings together and replaces the previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. It simplifies and strengthens the law, removes inconsistencies, and makes it easier for people to understand and comply with it. Most of the Act came into force on 1st October 2010.

The Act includes a new public sector equality duty (the 'general duty'), replacing the separate duties on race, disability, and gender equality. This came into force on 5th April 2011.

The general duty covers the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnerships
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality
- Religion or belief – including lack of belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

It applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

What is the general duty?

The aim of the general duty is to ensure that public authorities and those carrying out a public function consider how they can positively contribute to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in their day-to-day activities. The duty ensures that equality considerations are built into the design of policies and the delivery of services, and that they are kept under review. This will achieve better outcomes for all.

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

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- 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.

The Specific Duties in Wales

The broad purpose of the specific duties in Wales is to help listed bodies in their performance of the general duty and to aid transparency.

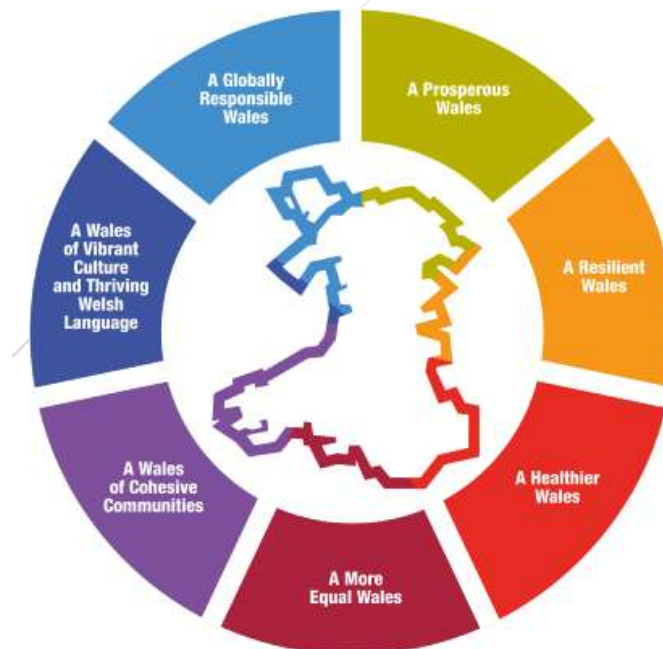
The specific duties in Wales are set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. The specific duties in Wales came into force on 6th April 2011.

The specific duties in Wales cover:

- Objectives
- Strategic Equality Plans
- Engagement
- Assessing impact
- Equality information
- Employment information
- Pay differences
- Staff training
- Procurement
- Annual reporting
- Publishing
- Welsh Ministers' reporting
- Review
- Accessibility

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Council's Vision and Equality Objectives for 2024-2028 support the Council's Well-being Objectives and the seven Well-being Goals (shown in the diagram below) and link to the five ways of working (the Sustainable Development Principle) that are set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.





Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 replaced the Welsh Language Act 1993 and as part of the legislation, in Wales the Welsh language has equal legal status with English and must not be treated less favourably.

Public bodies must comply with a set of national Welsh Language Standards which the Welsh Language Commissioner issued via a Compliance Notice to the Council. The Compliance Notice sets out which of the 176 standards in the legislation apply to the Council, along with any exemptions and their implementation dates.

Welsh language issues are not covered by the Equality Act but rather have a set of Standards under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, it has long been recognised that the equality and Welsh language policy agendas complement and inform each other. This is further reinforced by the goal within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028

MTCBC's Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-2028 reflects our commitment to equality in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil. The purpose of the plan is to improve equal opportunities within our communities through service delivery, employment, commissioning, leadership and working in partnership.

We want a County Borough where everyone is treated equally and fairly in all aspects of their lives; where no one is discriminated against or placed at a disadvantage due to their background or identity.

“A place where diversity is valued and respected and everyone can participate, flourish and have the opportunity to fulfil their potential free from discrimination and prejudice.”

Our Equalities Vision for Merthyr Tydfil

As a Council, we have a duty to tackle and challenge discrimination and disadvantage so that people feel safe from harassment and everyone has access to high quality services. This Strategic Equality Plan will help us to ensure that we focus on positive outcomes for people in Merthyr Tydfil.

The plan highlights links to legislation and regulations covering Welsh Language Standards and Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, including any new legislation.

Our Equality Objectives for 2024-2028

We have engaged with our communities and our workforce in developing our equality objectives. We have also used relevant information to inform our objectives including looking forward to considering potential future changes that we need to consider in assessing impact. We want to ensure we are making progress in advancing equality and inclusion for all protected characteristic groups and the objectives will assist us in continuing to do this.

Objectives 2024-2028	
Inclusive Engagement and Participation	Engage with our communities and workforce to support effective participation and encourage people to be involved.
Accessible Services	Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing our services.
Inclusive and Diverse Workforce	Support an inclusive and diverse workforce, which reflects the communities in Merthyr Tydfil.
Equity of pay	Ensure equity of pay across Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.
Safe, Inclusive and Cohesive Communities	Promote and facilitate safe, inclusive and cohesive communities.
Education, Skills and Employment	Improve education, skills and employment opportunities.

These Equality Objectives will be delivered through the associated Action Plan. Several actions were identified under each objective and work has been progressing to deliver these actions. The Strategic Equality Plan will be reviewed to reflect any updates and changes to legislation or requirements as we progress.

Integrated Impact Assessment

As a part of ensuring we are complying with our duty, we regularly review the Council's Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) to ensure it includes up to date requirements for consideration when making strategic decisions.

In 2024-2025, the IIA was updated to include more detailed assessment against the Welsh Language. This is to further enhance compliance with the Welsh Language standards and ensure we are considering the impact on the Welsh Language in more detail.

Sections included:

- Number of Welsh Speakers
- Opportunities to promote the Welsh Language
- Compliance with the Welsh Language Standards
- The Welsh Language being treated no less favourably than the English Language.

The process for completing IIA's was also updated in April 2025. IIA's are no longer required for information reports of backward-looking reports. They will still be required for strategic decisions, service changes, budget proposals, policies, service redesign etc. This has been communicated to all managers and information about the changes, including guidance is on our Intranet.

Performance Assessment

Below is the summary of progress against delivering our Equality Objectives within our Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-2028.

Theme: Inclusive Engagement and Participation

Objective: Engage with our communities and workforce to support effective participation and encourage people to be involved

One of the objectives in the Strategic Equality Plan is Inclusive Engagement and Participation. Community Cohesion is essential within the County Borough as it provides an environment where strong and positive relationships can be developed between people with different backgrounds. Cohesive communities are communities which are better able to tackle common problems, to provide mutual support and to work together for a positive future. Residents in good cohesive communities feel safer, more secure, and have a sense of belonging.

Here is a summary of how this has been actioned and how other external organisations and internal work has contributed towards meeting the objective.

Community Events

The Jo Cox Great Get Together

The Great Get Together is an annual celebration in the UK of everything that unites our communities, inspired by Jo Cox's belief that we have more in common than that which divides us. Jo Cox was an MP and passionate campaigner, activist and humanitarian who was tragically killed on her way to meet her constituents.

On Friday 21st June, Cohesion Officers along with the Stephen and George Charity organised a coffee morning for the public. Local Assembly Member Dawn Bowden AM was in attendance along with officers from South Wales Police.

In addition, schools across Merthyr were sent educational packs to enable them to deliver focused assemblies or lessons as well as assist them in organising events if they so wished.

LGBTQ+

Squirrel Friends is a monthly support meeting for the trans community, and it continues to be supported by the Community Cohesion team. The team have met with the group several times to discuss any concerns surrounding hate crime and support aimed at trans people in the community. Officers have supported them in finding a new venue and funding for their support group.

A timeline collection of the history of LGBTQ+ in Wales has been created, and a timeline for Merthyr Tydfil is included. It's a great insight into some of the highlights from Merthyr Tydfil's sexual orientation and gender identity history.

Hate Crime

Hate Crime Awareness Week

Hate Crime Awareness Week (HCAW) this year took place between 3rd and 7th February. HCAW is a dedicated campaign aimed at raising awareness about hate crimes and promoting tolerance and understanding among communities. It is a week that encourages organisations, key partners, and communities to work together to tackle local hate crime and minimise its effects.

During HCAW various events and initiatives were organised by the Community Cohesion team to educate people about the impact of hate crimes and how to report them, as well as to encourage communities to come together to combat hatred and prejudice.

Community engagement sessions were held at:

- Trago Mills
- Merthyr College
- Abercanaid Community School
- The Town Centre Hub, Merthyr Tydfil

The Cohesion team have distributed posters and leaflets to all local surgeries and other venues containing information on how to report a hate crime. Local schools were sent emails signposting them to the relevant websites which contained resources to support assemblies and lessons. In addition to these activities, a social media post and staff email was also distributed.

Following an alleged racist incident at a Merthyr Town FC football match, the cohesion team reached out to the board at the club and arranged to meet to offer support with the investigation surrounding it and ongoing support for the officials and fans. The incident was well publicised in the news and on social media and the support we offered was greatly received by the club. We have offered our ongoing support for the next season by way of hate crime posters and leaflets to be displayed at home games containing a QR code for ease of reporting as well as any further support they may require.

Race for Hate

On Friday 27th September, South Wales Police held the inaugural Race For Hate in the Sobell Centre, Aberdare, that involved over 1200 children from across Merthyr Tydfil and RCT.

It was an opportunity for the Police, Cohesion team and school children to unite in their commitment to fight hate. The day was filled with a lot of fun and enjoyment but it was also an opportunity to raise awareness of how hate crime and hate incidents can impact individuals.

Holocaust Memorial Day

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) is a day for reflection, remembrance, and education. Its primary purpose is to ensure that the memory of the Holocaust is preserved and that the lessons from this dark period in history are passed on to future generations.

This year marked the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau; one of the most notorious concentration and extermination camps operated by the Nazis. It also marked the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia.

This year's theme for HMD 2025 was 'For a Better Future' meaning hope that people can come together, learn both from and about the past, and take actions to make a better future for all.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council joined people across the globe in remembering the victims of the Holocaust. A wreath was laid at the Jewish Memorial Cemetery in Cefn Coed by senior Council officers along with South Wales Police.

LGBT+ History Month

LGBT+ History Month runs throughout February. It is an exciting, informative, and celebratory month to educate out prejudice and make LGBTQ+ communities, in all their rich diversity, visible. It also aims to promote a safer and more inclusive society where the varied spectrum of sexuality and gender is universally accepted and spoken about openly.

The theme for 2025 was 'Activism and Social Change' which celebrated the contribution of LGBT+ people in making the world a better place for us all.

MTCBC was proud to support LGBT+ History Month and a flag raising ceremony was held on 5th February where the Pride flag was raised outside the Civic Centre.

An inclusive workshop called 'Flower Art' was held at Cyfarthfa Castle. Attendees were able to learn, discuss and make a keepsake inspired by LGBT+ History month. It involved a friendly cuppa, a mini tour of the LGBT+ art collection, and then craft.

Pride Month

Pride Month is about acceptance, equality, celebrating the work of LGBTQIA+ people, education in history and raising awareness of issues affecting the community.

Pride Day is celebrated on 28th June. This day marks the date in history when the Stonewall uprisings took place in New York City in 1969. Pride Month aims to commemorate the uprising, which had ripple effects around the globe and shaped reforms in law and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ identity.

To celebrate Pride Day, the Progress Flag was raised outside the Civic Centre on 1st June and flown for the month to celebrate diversity within our communities. Some MTCC officers and Councillors attended the Pride Cymru 2024 event in Cardiff and marched in the parade during the annual Pride Cymru celebration. They attended, alongside other Welsh Local Authorities, under the 'Proud Councils' banner.

Merthyr Tydfil Pride Event

In 2024, Merthyr Tydfil held its second Pride Event on Saturday 17th August. It was a colourful and vibrant day, starting with Pride March through the town centre. The event was held at The College, with food and drink stalls, local businesses, and live entertainment.

It was a fantastic day, with lots of local supporters, sponsors, organisations, and charities helping to make it a success.

MTCBC officers ran a stall. Flyers and merchandise were distributed promoting ways in which hate crime can be reported, along with a QR code that takes the user directly to the 101 reporting page which can be used anonymously. Officers also used the opportunity to engage with both members and supporters of the LGBTQ+ community to raise awareness of the importance of reporting hate crimes, and to get feedback on how things can be improved.

White Ribbon Day

An event was organised by MTCBCs White Ribbon Community Group to be held on 25th November to show support for victims of domestic abuse. The event would include a flag raising ceremony outside the Civic Centre ending with a candlelight vigil outside the Town Centre Hub. A range of partnership speakers would be in attendance and refreshments provided. However, due to a weather warning the event had to be cancelled at short notice. We will look to run a similar event on the next White Ribbon Day in November 2025. Meetings for this have already taken place.

Gypsy Roma Traveller Community

Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month (GRTHM) is an annual observance that takes place in June. The purpose of this month-long celebration is to raise awareness about the history, culture, and contributions of the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) communities, as well as to challenge the stereotypes and discrimination they often face.

The Cohesion Team worked closely with MTCBC's Glynmil Site Manager who promoted and organised an event for GRTHM. The event was held at the Glynmil site on 28th June 2024.

Local schools were in attendance and activities were put on by a range of local businesses and organisations. Dawn Bowden AM, South Wales Police, local councillors and wider community residents also attended.

The day was a huge success and the residents were keen to repeat this success and organise more future events that involved the wider, non-GRT community.

The Community Cohesion team continue to meet regularly with the Gypsy Roma Traveller Officer at Glynmil and support them in arranging education and training packages as well as assisting him to source funding for ongoing and future projects.

Carers Rights Day

Every day, 12,000 people become unpaid carers for a partner, family member or a friend. On 21st November, at the Town Centre Hub, a Carers Rights Day coffee and a chat event was held.

In June it was Carers week, and drop-in sessions were organised at the Town Centre Hub. Carers could pop in and see what local support is available to them. There were a variety of

organisations present to explain what support/services were right for them. Organisations included: VAMT, Mencap, Citizens Advice, Alzheimer's Society Cymru and many more.

Community Cohesion Football Tournament

On Sunday 19th May, South Wales Police and the Community Cohesion team organised a summer Cohesion Football Tournament in Merthyr Tydfil. The tournament consisted of 23 teams that included teams made up of staff from local authorities, SWP, homeless charities, the local Mosque, Merthyr Malayali community and various other minority community groups.

The Cohesion team in Merthyr Tydfil linked up with Social Services and supported a group of young unaccompanied asylum seekers to form a team and take part in the tournament. The team funded five weeks worth of training facilities to bring them together as they are living across South Wales. This enabled them to meet each other, form relationships and embed themselves within the local community.

Black History Month

Black History Month is observed every October. It is an opportunity to celebrate the outstanding contributions that black people have made to British society, whether that be today or historically. It is also an opportunity for people to learn more about the effects of racism and how to challenge negative stereotypes.

The theme for 2024 was 'Reclaiming Narratives', which marks a significant shift towards recognising and correcting the narratives of black history and culture.

Black History Month is also a time for people to learn more about the effects of racism and how to challenge negative stereotypes.

Zero Racism Wales

Zero Racism Wales is a campaign led by Race Council Cymru, supported by Welsh Government and Community Cohesion Coordinators. It calls on businesses, organisations and individuals committed to promoting racial harmony and equity to sign a pledge and agree a zero-tolerance policy to racism in Wales.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council commits to promoting a zero tolerance to racism throughout the Council and has signed the Race Council Cymru's Zero Racism Wales policy. By signing the policy, it reaffirms our commitment to ensuring that MTCBC treats every person fairly and equally irrespective of race, that there are equal opportunities in employment and service delivery and that the Council will adhere to the Equality Act 2010 and provide fair and equitable services to all. As a Council, we agree to take a stand against racism and promote a more inclusive and equal workplace and society that makes every individual feel safe, valued, and included.

The Council's full pledge can be found on the Zero Racism Wales website.

Welsh Government aims to create a Wales that is anti-racist by 2030, with the aid of the Anti-Racism Wales Action Plan. The plan highlights the deeply rooted racial inequalities

experiences by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in Wales. The plan can be viewed on the Welsh Government website.

MTCBC's Cohesion team attended a community engagement event in Merthyr organised by Welsh Government, to meet with the community and talk about the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan. The aim was to ensure people are aware of the plan and what it means for Black Asian and Minority communities. The event was an opportunity for people to ask questions and discuss openly the actions contained in the plan. Wider teams also attended a forum hosted by Welsh Government to discuss local issues.

Several agencies were in attendance and the conversations were constructive and allowed us to plan how we can engage further with relevant groups in Merthyr specifically.

Refugee Week

Refugee week is a UK-wide festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary.

Refugee Week took place from 17th to 23rd June and this year the theme was 'Our Home'. The week focused on creating conversations about what 'our home' means to everyone.

On Friday 21th June, the Cohesion Team organised a coffee morning at Cyfarthfa Castle and Museum which was open to the general public and was well attended by Ukrainian families in the County Borough, alongside members of the resettlement team for the Local Authority, officers from SWP and members of the general public.

Following the coffee morning, local historian Huw Williams gave a talk on Merthyr's history of immigration and the 'Movement of People'. Local school pupils were also invited to the talk.

Whole staff email and social media posts were distributed to mark the event.

Equalities Monitoring Form

We have updated our equalities monitoring form for engagement, and are ensuring that this form is attached to all external consultations. This is an optional form and allows us to know more about those responding to ensure we are engaging with diverse groups during our engagement and consultations.

Theme: Inclusive and Diverse Workforce

Objective: Support an inclusive and diverse workforce, which reflects the communities in Merthyr Tydfil

We want employees to feel safe in the environment they work and to be themselves. To achieve this, we work collaboratively and support and facilitate training and learning opportunities so that Equalities is recognised and incorporated into roles.

Information on the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty is available on the Council's Intranet and Internet for staff to view. We also have an Equalities and Welsh Language section for staff online which holds information, resources, and links.

Work completed to meet this objective includes:

Equalities Calendar

An equalities calendar is produced and shared with staff and councillors every January and is available on the staff Intranet. The purpose of the calendar is to bring together a list of national awareness days and events that recognise and celebrate diversity, equality, and inclusion. It is not an exhaustive list but at a glance staff can see key dates that are listed each month.

The calendar is a useful tool and a practical resource to help promote awareness of diversity, equality, and inclusion throughout the Council.

Proud Councils

The Proud Councils network in South Wales is a partnership of Local Authorities working together to support LGBTQ+ issues and actively promote LGBTQ+ inclusion within their respective communities. The member Councils, which include Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport, Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea and Torfaen, collaborate on various initiatives and activities aimed at advancing LGBTQ+ rights and fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment.

The main objectives and purpose of Proud Councils include:

- **Supporting LGBTQ+ Staff:** The network seeks to improve the support and resources available to LGBTQ+ employees within local authorities in South Wales. This includes promoting workplace equality, providing resources, and offering training on LGBTQ+ issues.
- **Leadership in LGBTQ+ Rights:** Proud Councils aims to position local government across South Wales as a visible leader in the field of LGBTQ+ rights. This involves advocating for policy changes and practices that protect and promote LGBTQ+ rights.
- **Community Inclusion:** The network is dedicated to championing LGBTQ+ inclusion within the communities served by member Councils. This includes outreach efforts, awareness campaigns, and initiatives that promote respect and diversity.
- **Public Services Accessibility:** Proud Councils members are committed to ensuring that public services are accessible and welcoming to everyone, regardless of their sexuality, gender identity, age, race, disability, or religion. This commitment emphasises the importance of inclusive policies and practices.

By joining Proud Councils, we demonstrate our commitment to creating inclusive and diverse communities. We actively work together to eliminate discrimination and promote acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals and their rights. These efforts not only benefit LGBTQ+ residents and employees but also contribute to a more equitable and inclusive society.

The network has continued to work closely together, gathering ideas for future awareness and events.

Training and continued professional development

Staff new to the Local Authority must undertake the Level 1 Welsh course as a condition of employment and existing staff are required to upskill and undertake the course.

Training and continued professional development are key elements of the Council's Performance Management Framework for staff member's performance appraisals and one-to-ones. This enables employee training needs for equalities to be identified and addressed.

Our Corporate Induction process for all new staff includes modules on the Council's visions & values, equality & diversity and directs staff to our Dignity & Respect at Work policy which enforces our zero tolerance on bullying & harassment.

For those who manage staff, a Managers Induction process looks at MTCBC's visions & values, policies, and procedures from a manager's perspective. There are also several soft skills sessions to ensure new managers can support staff through the Performance Management process which underpins our corporate values and behaviours. Additional sessions continue to be developed following consultation through employee engagement activities.

A new Hate Crime Awareness training package has been made available for all staff via the online learning portal on the staff Intranet, and can be accessed at any time. In person training can still be arranged with the Cohesion team should a manager request it.

Learning at Work Week

Learning at Work Week in May provided bite sized sessions for all staff, aimed at the importance and benefits of learning and development. The sessions were wide ranging and included health awareness sessions, digital skills, and self development.

Some of the sessions were held online, and some in person at the Civic Centre and other external building. All staff were encouraged to take part, as it aimed to put a spotlight on the importance and benefits of continual learning and development.

Training Compendium

A number of training resources to support staff and managers has been collated into a 'Training Compendium' on the staff Intranet, with the aim to help them to learn, develop, upskill and achieve their best at work. It lists 'in house' training provided by the Council and some external partnerships which can be utilised by staff. Equalities is one of the main areas of training available.

Welsh language for employees

The Council has developed a Welsh Language Programme structured using the 'Leading a Bilingual Country' model for change. This is focused on a key communication narrative that – "Together – We are able to - Take small steps". It builds the culture and ethos that the Welsh language belongs to us all.

The introduction of our #SiarterShwmaeronment approach, which is being piloted across 3 directorates, has acted as a 'call to action', allowing the Council to embed the Welsh Language more effectively and meaningfully across the Council. It sets out clear and measurable targets that incorporate the Welsh Language Standards and foster an increased use of Welsh in the workplace. It has been rolled out in three directorates initially – People Services and Transformation, Learning, and Social Services (Children) with progress actively monitored by the WLPO.

The framework is structured around a tiered approach of Bronze, Silver and Gold. The three directorates are working towards achieving the Bronze tier by the Summer 2025 with the aim to then move onto Silver. The long-term aim is to roll out the #SiarterShwmaeronment across all Council directorates.

The Welsh Language team has also made a great deal of progress in working with a variety of different teams and directorates over the last year to ensure compliance and more understanding and depth awareness of the Standards and the use of Welsh in the workplace.

Welsh Language skills of employees

The Council recognised the need to implement a more robust system for monitoring skills, and records are kept of the language skills of our staff.

There is a consistent number of employees with high-level Welsh language skills. However a significant proportion of staff remain with "no skills" or low-level skills across listening, speaking, reading and writing. A new CEFR-based audit tool is planned for implementation in 2025-26 which may improve the accuracy of skill assessments. Employees with basic or no skills are being encouraged to enrol in courses – a focus on voluntary upskilling rather than mandated learning.

Anti-bullying week

Anti-bullying week 2024 took place from 11th to 15th November with the theme 'choose respect'. The week involved directing staff to e-learning courses on bullying, harassment and sexual harassment.

On the 12th we had an odd socks day, as a way for everyone to express themselves and celebrate their individuality and uniqueness.

Also, Information was distributed on topics such as gaslighting in the workplace, workplace conflict, discrimination at work and handling bullying.

Disability Confident Employer Status

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council has been signed up to the Disability Confident pledge and possess Level 1 Committed Status – one of the 18,000 employers across the UK to join this important scheme. We want to help play a leading role in changing attitudes for the better by making opportunities within the Council more accessible for all.

In continuing our Disability Confident journey, we have now achieved Level 2 status of being a Disability Confident Employer which ensures that we remain committed to undertaking core actions for providing opportunities for disabled people so that they can fulfil their potential and reach their aspirations. We are looking to move to Level 3 in the near future and work has begun on assessing the requirements of moving from Level 2 to Level 3.

Staff have been encouraged to add the Disability Confident Employer logo to their email signature so that when interacting with any internal and external parties, we are showcasing our commitment.

Neurodiversity Week

For Neurodiversity Week, we raised awareness by inviting staff to take part in webinars, training and engage in our resources on some of the different types of neurodiversity. This was important to educate staff and create an inclusive workplace. We focused on different neurodivergent types such as Dyslexia, DCD (Dyspraxia), Dyscalculia, Autism and ADHD.

For each of these an infographic was created, which included information such as what the condition is, the signs, strengths, difficulties and support we can give. These were sent alongside other posters, videos and resources to all staff. Also a week-long event schedule was communicated where staff could attend free webinars with experts on different neurodiverse topics.

Staff were advised of the Recite Me tool that is on our corporate website and available for everyone to use so they can view our website in a way that works best for them. We have a neurodiversity section on our staff Intranet where all of this information is available for staff to view at any time.

Worker Protection Act 2023

The Worker Protection Act is an amendment of the Equality Act 2010 and came into effect on the 26th October 2024. The act states that employers have a legal duty to take a proactive and preventative approach to protect their workers from sexual harassment. This duty means that employers need to proactively think about the potential risks in their organisation and take reasonable steps to eliminate or reduce them. This also includes the prevention of sexual harassment by third parties such as customers and clients.

We have begun making assessments and identifying any required changes. Training has been undertaken with Headteachers and updated provided on our new legislative updates page on the Intranet.

Carer's Leave Act 2023

The carer's leave regulations came into place from the 6th April 2024. The regulation allows employees to take time off to provide or arrange care for a dependent with long-term care needs. Eligible employees are entitled to up to one week of unpaid carer's leave every 12 months. This right is available from the first day of employment. This has been included on our Intranet and communicated.

Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Act 2023

The Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Act 2023 introduced new entitlements for parents whose newborns require extended hospital care.

From 6th April 2025 the entitlement includes neonatal care leave, a day one right to up to a maximum of 12 weeks of additional leave and statutory neonatal care pay for eligible employees. The entitlement to receive statutory neonatal care pay mirrors the entitlement to maternity and shared parental leave pay. This has been included on our Intranet and communicated.

Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan

A refreshed Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP) was published in 2024. The Plan reflects the Welsh Government's firm commitment to building an inclusive and equitable society for all Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people and communities in Wales. The refreshed plan emphasises the changes required to deliver on commitments to make Wales an anti-racist nation by 2030.

This is included as an action with the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028. Implementation of this plan, including other plans is being undertaken, with recommendations being identified and further work requiring to be undertaken in meeting the actions within the plan. We have stepped through the action plan and identified local authority actions once the plan was first launched and since the refresh in 2024. We have also stepped through any specific recommendations from the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru and aim to develop a draft implementation plan in response to this.

Other legislative updates following March 2025 will be included within the 2025-2026 Annual Equality Report.

Theme: Safe, Inclusive and Cohesive Communities

Objective: Promote and facilitate safe, inclusive and cohesive communities

Community engagement, inclusion and participation is vital to the Council in achieving positive change for the community. Without knowing more about the people that make up the communities in Merthyr Tydfil, we are unable to identify specific issues or barriers that may prevent them accessing our services or engaging with the Council when they need to.

Some examples of work carried out to action this theme during this period are as follows.

Youth Service

MTCBC's Youth Service and commissioned partners support young people aged 11-25 within the County Borough, in settings including schools/education provisions, youth clubs and through outreach work.

In November 2024, the service and its commissioned partners were awarded the Welsh Government Silver Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales following a week-long assessment process (written evidence, interviews and observations) undertaken by the Education Workforce Council (EWC). The Silver Quality Mark assesses organisations against four standards: equalities and diversity, involving young people, curriculum and workforce development

The service met all the standards, with areas of good practice highlighted, including a substantial amount of work undertaken around the area of equalities and diversity.

Through additional funding from the Welsh Government Youth Support Grant, a series of projects were undertaken by local youth provisions that examine and address the needs of young people with protected characteristics and additional learning needs, whilst extending the knowledge of wider groups of young people.

Topics covered in the projects ranged from social history and the change of attitudes over time, developing democracy within provisions, access to sport and physical activity for disabled young people, anti-oppressive practice, the gender pay gap, protected characteristics and celebrating the contribution of ethnic and cultural minorities to the wider economy and society. The projects have achieved their aims through a combination of project work, off site activities and visits, empowering encounters with experts, information days and events that highlight diversity and inclusion.

Ageing Well in Wales

The Age-Friendly approach, developed by the World Health Organisation, calls for stakeholders and practitioners to refocus their thinking around the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population. It requires a collaborative approach from all participants. An age-friendly community is one which supports people of all ages to live and age well. It maximises the potential of our ageing society and creates an environment where everybody looks forward to growing older.

In 2021, 39.6% (23,284) of residents were aged 50+ in Merthyr Tydfil - up 3.6% since 2011 (ONS 2021)

We have an ageing population and with just under 2 out of 5 of the population in Merthyr Tydfil aged 50+, it is more important than ever for local communities, decision-makers, and organisations to work together to make an age friendly Merthyr Tydfil.

We are working to improve the quality of life of older people in Merthyr Tydfil, and we want to ensure that Merthyr Tydfil is an age friendly place where people can age healthily, happily, and safely.

As a Local Authority we are currently working towards membership with the World Health Organisation (WHO) to be recognised as an Age Friendly Community and become part of their Global Network for Age Friendly Cities and Communities. The Global Network was established in 2010, with a view of making communities a great place to age in. Their mission is to connect places wanting to make their communities great to grow old in, and to inspire change. In response to our ageing population, the network also targets action at a local level that champions the full participation of older residents within the community, so to enhance healthy and active ageing.

The WHO focuses on 8 interconnected domains or features within the community to highlight and overcome barriers affecting the wellbeing of older people. If the needs of people as they age are considered throughout these domains, then we can help ensure that Merthyr Tydfil is a place where everybody can age happily, healthily, and safely.

Membership to the network is not an accreditation for age-friendliness. Rather, it echoes our commitment to listening to the needs of our residents who are aged 50+, and work in collaboration with other sectors and organisation across our County Borough to build age friendly physical and social environments. Membership is a commitment to share our experiences, successes and difficulties with other cities and communities who are members of the network.

In order to sign up to the WHO's network of Age Friendly communities and cities, we first need to establish a baseline of our older residents. An engagement exercise was undertaken with staff, senior managers, and the public to gather feedback on the 8 domains. In 2023 Age Friendly Merthyr Tydfil launched a Merthyr-wide Age Friendly survey based on the WHO's 8 domains. The aim of the survey was to gather the views of older people, as well as their carers, friends, and family, to help build a picture of what is important to residents in our local communities compared to what services are available to them. The findings of this survey have informed the development of our baseline assessment 'Age Friendly Merthyr Tydfil.' The report identifies where we are currently and our key recommendations for the future of an Age Friendly Merthyr Tydfil. The survey identified the top 10 'gaps' of needs of what was important to residents in Merthyr Tydfil versus what services and provision is available to them.

Analysis of this engagement and consultation is currently taking place so we can develop our baseline assessment. We have also looked at specific elements within the consultation feedback to inform other strategies and to ensure our services are accessible for all.

Upon establishing our baseline, the next stage is to complete our application to become a member of the WHO's network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities which will allow us to engage and work with other members of the network in sharing best practice and ensuring that Merthyr Tydfil is a great place to live and age well.

Schools

Lots of events and activities took place during the year in all our schools, to raise awareness and to educate the young people of Merthyr Tydfil on equalities, diversity, and inclusion.

This includes the following:

- The Community Cohesion team delivered Hate Crime Awareness training in several schools
- For Welsh Language, all schools in the County Borough are now involved in the Siarter Iaith/Cymraeg Campus awards with both Welsh Medium Primary Schools achieving their Gold Awards.
- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Rhyd y Grug, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Santes Tudful, Ysgol y Graig, Pantyscallog, Ysgol Uwchradd Afon Taf and Pen y Dre were successful in reaching the Urdd National Eisteddfod in Meifod in their respective competitions.
- Pen Y Dre High School hosted a play called 'Its not love'. The performance opened up important conversations among the students about healthy versus unhealthy relationships.
- To commemorate international Women's Day, an inspiring event took place where 100 year 8 learners were empowered by remarkable women in construction.
- Grrnfields school worked with a company to design an app focused on improving wellbeing and reducing stress. Greenfields is the first special school in the world to have created an app.

Children's rights

Children's rights are at the heart of everything we do. We have a long history of supporting and upholding children's rights in Wales. One hundred years on from the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, we are continuing to put children and young people at the front and centre of the decisions we make. We want a Wales for all children, a wonderful place to grow up, live and to work, now and in the future.

In MTCBC we are developing our participation strategy within our revamped Corporate Parenting Board. This work will enable children and young people, carers and parents to exercise their right to be heard in decisions that affect them. Advocacy and the active offer is promoted for our children looked after to ensure that they are able take full advantage of their rights. To ensure that young people have meaningful opportunities to influence decisions in their lives, we have started to pilot young people chairing their children looked after reviews. Those that have taken place have been positive and MTCBC hopes that this work can be extended across both Merthyr Tydfil and Wales.

Adult Community Learning

To celebrate Adult Learners Week, an event was held in the Compass Community Hub on Wednesday 11th September. Free taster sessions were available, such as pottery, dance and more. There was also an opportunity to join a guided walk to Cyfarthfa Park with the Learn Through the Outdoors tutors.

Another event to mark Adult Learners Week was held in Trago Mills on September 14th by the Community Learning Team. A variety of taster sessions were on offer to showcase the diverse services and activities offered by our partners.

Armed Forces Covenant

MTCBC are proud to be one of the Local Authorities in Wales to have signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant. The Armed Forces Covenant is a commitment from the nation that those who serve or have served in the armed forces, along with their families, will be treated fairly. It ensures they are not disadvantaged because of their service. The Council has a proud record of valuing its armed services, past and present, and the commitment to the Covenant significantly progresses the Council's objectives to support our Armed Forces Community.

The Council leads in encouraging other organisations to support the Armed Forces community through a Partnership Armed Forces Covenant Panel. The Panel brings together multiple statutory, non-statutory and third sector organisations, all with a role in supporting civilian and military communities.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council remains deeply committed to upholding the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, actively supporting local veteran groups such as the Merthyr Veterans Group, a remarkable team of volunteer veterans who have been nominated for Group of the Year at the Volunteer Recognition Awards 2025.

Our dedication extends beyond community support. The Council is currently working towards securing the Gold Award from the MOD Employer Recognition Scheme, following a productive meeting with the Regional Engagement Officer to identify new ways to enhance support for Armed Forces family employees.

We play an active role in the Cwm Taf Armed Forces Covenant Panel, collaborating with neighbouring councils, the local health board, charities, and organisations that champion the needs of the Armed Forces community.

Across the region, our Armed Forces Liaison Officer has been actively promoting awareness of the Covenant's due regard duty, helping to embed meaningful support for the Armed Forces community into local policy and service delivery. In addition, the Liaison Officer has established a connection with Brynawel Rehab Centre, a leading residential facility for alcohol and drug dependency treatment. This partnership aims to secure dedicated placements for veterans struggling with substance misuse, offering them access to tailored recovery programmes and holistic support.

To further improve accessibility and awareness, the Council's Armed Forces Team has recently updated its Armed Forces webpages. The refreshed site is now more user-friendly and includes up-to-date information on services and benefits available to veterans, a request-for-support page, and details of available groups in the area ensuring the Armed Forces community can easily find the help they need.

We also welcomed our new Armed Forces Champion, Councillor David Jones, the Council's Deputy Leader. He has already built strong connections with local veterans, and his passion for their wellbeing continues to drive our commitment forward. With a solid background in community leadership and a deep dedication to supporting veterans, Councillor Jones is well placed to strengthen our Covenant work.

Disability Sport

Lots of new sports sessions and events were started in 2024-2025

- An ALN & disability Family engagement project was run. It was a physical activity session held in the southern cluster of Merthyr Tydfil.
- A new weekly multisport session based in Treharris Boys and girls club started, working with the Merthyr youth service.
- There were delivery of physical activities for families and young people with disabilities and ALN. A session was piloted as there was no provision in the south of the Borough.
- We had some collaborative support with Streetgames. Streetgames is a 'sport for development' charity and looks to work with communities across the UK to transform young people's lives through sport.
- MTCBC is supporting Halo to enhance opportunities and physical activities within the centre, and a new weekly 5-a-side football session, based in Aberfan community centre, was established. The sessions are open to all girls and women to pay and play recreationally. Active Merthyr funded the initial 8 weeks of coaching and the hall hire.
- A ladies only table tennis session started in October 2024, which is for ladies who are 60+. The weekly evening sessions are currently based in Treharris boys and girls club, and due to start in Dowlais after Easter. They are a pay and play activity, and Active Merthyr provided the funds for equipment and hall hire to start initially.
- A volunteer led walking group, 'Merthyr women walking', meet twice weekly at Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre with support from Halo so participants can use the toilets and café. Active Merthyr provided funding for the volunteers to attend a walk leader course and for safety winter walking gear.
- 11 local clubs have been supported through the Tackling Barriers fund, with small grants of up to £500 to kick start or safeguard women and girls provision. This included covering costs of suitable equipment, paying for coach education or covering venue hire.
- Active Merthyr provided Rock UK with funding to start an over 60's weekly climbing session. These are based in the Rock UK summit centre in Bedlinog. Funds were used to start the initial project for instructor costs for the first 8 weeks. They are now sustainable and sessions are fully booked for the summer term 2025.
- Funding has been provided to the Malayali Cultural Association group based in Merthyr Tydfil. The funding gives support and guidance to the community. It funded equipment for their first ever Borough wide sports day, along with support to facilitate the event with a sport development coordinator to advise and offer their expertise.

- Women and girls Minority Ethnic badminton sessions started in Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre. Active Merthyr provided funding support for equipment to run these weekly sessions.

Welsh Language

Below is some of the key work that took place in 2024-2025 to promote and support the Welsh Language in the community. The full details of all achievements for this period can be found in the Council's Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report for 2024-2025 on the Council's website.

Eisteddfod RCT 2024

MTCBC partnered with The College, Merthyr Tydfil to showcase the work around the Welsh Language in the Borough in a collaborative stall at the 2024 National Eisteddfod in August. This collaboration saw all directorates of the Council taking part to showcase their individual services highlighting the strength of our work. The stall featured a diverse range of activities, exhibits and reflected the Welsh Language, the cultural heritage of Merthyr Tydfil and the services offered by the Council itself. There were approximately 1500 visitors to the stall during the course of the week

Diwrnod Shwmae Su'mae

To build on the success of the previous annual Diwrnod Shwmae Su'mae event, this year's event was arranged in conjunction with partners of the Welsh Education Forum (WEF) and the Welsh Language Strategy Steering Group. The event was held at Penderyn Square; this is the first time this event was held on this site. Seven primary schools and one secondary school participated in performing a variety of items. Entertainment for the younger children was provided by a storyteller, a face painter and various activities throughout the day. During the day, musical items were provided by a Welsh folk singer, a Welsh solo artist, a local music school and the Schools Music Service.

Approximately 1200 people attended the event over the course of the day allowing children, young people and the wider community to engage with the Welsh Language. 25 businesses were present, building on the previous event. The event provided positive publicity for the use of the Welsh language across Merthyr Tydfil. The partners who participated in the event were Mudiad Meithrin, Menter Iaith Merthyr Tudful and Rhieni Dros Addysg Gymraeg, Dysgu Cymraeg Morgannwg, Well Being Merthyr, Early Years Department Family Information Service of MTCBC, Community Focused School and The College, Merthyr Tydfil.

This year, the event progressed with an evening gig at Clwb Crown (a new venue in Merthyr Tydfil) involving Welsh bands. There was a moderate turn out for this gig, and it is hoped this can be built upon for the 2025-26 event.

Housing Services

In 2024-2025, Housing support services continued to deliver vital support and assistance to those who require it, to prevent and alleviate homelessness. Demand for reactive homelessness services such as our 24 staffed supported accommodations for those who have complex support needs continues to rise. There continues to be a greater demand than

we can accommodate within our hostels and supported accommodations, meaning that some vulnerable people are still residing in unsuitable temporary B&B accommodation. The Housing support grant funds skilled support staff to work with these individuals within their temporary accommodations, addressing root causes of homelessness, building resilience, and preparing people for independent living once suitable longer-term housing options become available.

We are in the process of commissioning a new 24/7 supported accommodation for 19 people with complex support needs. We hope this will provide the specialist support required by those with complex needs to remain in safe and stable temporary accommodation which meets their support needs and provides the stability required to address and overcome the barriers they face.

Pen-y-Dre apartments is now in its third year of operation, providing five self-contained apartments for young people (predominantly those leaving care) with self-contained apartments with on-site support workers to support them to study, train, volunteer and prepare for independent living.

Housing Support Grant funded floating support for specific service user needs as well as general support to maintain and sustain tenancies continues to be delivered across the County Borough. This included specialist provision for those with criminal offending histories, young people, older people, those with mental health needs, substance dependencies and people with disabilities.

Our resettlement support workers continue to provide specialist support to those settling in Merthyr Tydfil via the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The scheme has had a successful year with the majority of guests moving from sponsored placements into accommodation which is suitable for their family's needs. Many guests have gained employment, and their children have settled in local schools and colleges.

A new scheme to support people with physical disabilities and sensory loss is currently being delivered in partnership with our Social services department to ensure that we can best support people to access the housing they require in order to stay living independently in their own homes or other specially adapted properties for longer. It has proved to be very successful with 44 households supported in 24-25.

We continue to specify within our commissioned services that LGBTQ+ awareness training is required for our HSG funded contracts. We collect data in relation to LGBTQ+ status (from those who wish to share that information with us) and discuss the specific needs of LGBTQI+ people households both locally and regionally via our Regional Collaborative Group.

Glynmil Traveller Site

The Glynmil Gypsy Roma traveller site is a Local Authority run site with 24 plots, consisting of families and single occupants. Over the past few years, we have been fortunate enough to receive Capital Funding Grant from Welsh Government to make valuable improvements to utility blocks by upgrading kitchens and bathrooms.

In 2024-2025 (and 2026-2027) we received a Capital Grant award to continue the site upgrades, thus making sustainable communities and future proofing for the future generation. Improvements included:

- Plot upgrades including fencing, solar panels, independent electric supply, patio flooring etc.
- Upgrade of the community centre - this included new flooring throughout, redesign of kitchen area to facilitate group work, and new play equipment to start facilitating toddler groups and youth club.
- Grant funding was received for Winter Fuel Hardship, which was spent on electric meter top ups and gas bottles, which were vital to get our residents through the winter. Residents at our Gypsy, Roma Traveller site are adversely affected by higher electric and water tariffs as they are calculated at commercial rates. However, we hope to rectify this in Summer 2025 by installing individual electric meters to each home, thus allowing choice of provider and the move to residential rates.
- We have also been working closely with Keep Wales Tidy and have been awarded a grant, which has gone towards the development of an orchid on site, beehive, flower planting and outdoor furniture.
- Glynmill has also received funding for digital literacy and have been awarded a few laptops. We have been fortunate to use these with some residents to have support and assistance around their driving theory test.

Early Intervention and Prevention Service

The Early Intervention and Prevention Service (EIP) is based at the Town Centre Hub. The EIP housing service works with households as early as possible to prevent them from reaching crisis point, even if this is general housing advice and referrals to more specific support, from eviction notices and mediating with landlords to income maximisation through benefit entitlement or working in partnership with other Local authority services such as employability to upskill to obtain higher paid employment opportunities.

The EIP service has grown significantly since the Covid-19 Pandemic, stepping in to prevent evictions and provide swift assistance to individuals seeking alternative housing. A strong partnership with landlords and managing agents has been formed which has led to many positives such as effective mediation, better educated landlords and tenants that manage their tenancies more effectively. Landlords now approach the EIP with vacant properties, helping more individuals find private rental housing amidst limited community housing stock.

The EIP service saw over 2211 households engage with the service between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025.

Communication Boards

Merthyr Tydfil CBC are incredibly grateful to have received symbol-based communication boards through funding from the Welsh Government's 'Talk with Me' plan.

These boards are invaluable tools in helping non-speaking children to communicate their needs, thoughts, and emotions by touching the symbols on the board. By providing these communication boards, the Council are striving to create a more inclusive environment for all our children, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to express themselves effectively.

The communication boards can be currently found in 9 of our children's playgrounds across the County Borough, with a 10th board being installed later in the year.

Theme: Education, Skills and Employment

Objective: Improve education, skills and employment opportunities

Employability – ‘Aspire’

At Aspire, our commitment to inclusion and diversity is a vital part of the success of all our Programmes. Through tailored mentoring and utilisation of a wide network of support we create opportunities for individuals from all walks of life, including those facing personal and societal challenges. This enables them to excel. Below are some of our programmes:

The Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme

This programme has successfully increased female participation in male-dominated fields, with 32% of apprentices now being female. It provides tailored support for apprentices with learning difficulties, including mentoring and assistive tools. It also offers resources and structured support for apprentices facing mental health barriers.

Data:

Gender	Number of Apprentices	Percentage
Male	40	67.80%
Female	19	32.20%

Total 59

Barriers	Number of people
Access to Computers	3
Disabilities	3
Documentation/Licences	2
Health Issues	6
Language	2
Literacy/Numeracy	2
Transport	3
None	38

Total 59

Age	Number of people
16 – 20	33
21 – 30	21
31 – 40	3
Over 40	2

Total 59

The Aspire QuickStart Programme

This programme is designed for individuals seeking rapid and intense engagement with skills development and work-based experience for long term career readiness. It removes barriers for participants with hidden disabilities, learning differences, and mental health challenges. It

also builds confidence and employability skills, helping participants transition to sustainable career pathways.

50 attendees in total:

Gender	Number of applicants	Percentage
Male	31	62%
Female	19	38%

Barriers	Number of people
Access to Computers	6
Disabilities	2
Documentation/Licences	3
Health Issues	3
Debt/Financial Difficulties	2
Literacy/Numeracy	4
Transport	12
None	18

Age	Number of people
16 – 20	22
21 – 30	20
31 – 40	5
Over 40	3

Pathway To Work - Children Looked After Programme

This programme supports young people in care, addressing unique barriers to education and employment. It provides mentoring, bespoke training, and a strong focus on wellbeing. It creates a safe and inclusive space, leading to increased self-esteem and positive outcomes for participants.

Ewch Amdani (CLA)

This programme aims to raise aspirations among young people and encourage ambitious career goals. It provides workshops, mentoring, and exposure to diverse career pathways. Participants are equipped with skills and the confidence to pursue their professional futures, and gives young people new experiences.

Within Pathways to work we have many individuals if not all with adverse childhood experiences that also contribute and can act as a barrier. Each individual that pathway to work gets referred are assessed individually to meet any needs and support is specifically tailored to the individuals.

Welsh Language Inclusivity

Aspire is committed to promoting the Welsh language and culture across all programmes. Our Welsh Language Champion ensures inclusivity for Welsh-speaking participants and supports the bilingual heritage of Wales.

We also have a commitment to accessibility and well-being, and provide additional support for those with learning difficulties. Resources are tailored and learning paths are individualised for apprentices with conditions such as dyslexia. We use assistive technologies and mentorship to enhance learning outcomes. Mental Health support is also provided with structured mentorship, mental health first aid and access to external resources.

An example of some of the barriers we have encountered and supported on are:

- Dyslexia
- ADHD
- Poverty
- Childcare
- Loss of benefits V paid income
- Lack of skills/training
- Distraction (change to lifestyle after beginning earning)
- Lack of confidence/self esteem
- Lack of experience
- Language barriers
- Chronic health conditions
- Equipment (IT etc)
- Motivation and focus
- Transport

Awards

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's Housing and Regeneration Employability Team and People and Performance's Children's Services Team recently won the Bronze prize for the Community and Customer Focus Award at the iESE Award Ceremony.

The Employability Team assists individuals who are facing barriers to employment through the Council's QuickStart program and those searching for apprenticeships through the Shared Apprenticeship program.

The Pathway to Work programme, which is managed across the Employability Team and The CLA Education Team within Children's Services, specifically supports our Children Looked After and Care Leavers with a plethora of pre-employment to in employment and training support.

Out of 197 nominations, they were thrilled to have been voted in the top 3. The team felt it was such an honour to be recognised for their efforts to reinvigorate the local community. It is a true testament to the hard work, dedication, and passion of the team.

Compass Community Hub

The Compass Community Hub opened its doors on the 1st April 2023 to community members to enable them to access training, learning and employment support within the community, with the view to helping them to improve their employment circumstances

A variety of data has been captured over the length of the project which can better inform the way resources are used in the future.

The project has seen a vast need for the type of support provided by Compass over the last 12 months where the staff team has been increased to respond to the popularity of the program.

The data in this report has been captured from the sign-up paperwork which is completed by participants accessing support at Compass.

Due to the flexible nature of the Shared Prosperity Fund we have been enabled to work without limiting barriers for engagement, which is reflected in the demographics data below.

What we do:

- Provide differentiation in learning and learning aids to anyone who identifies an additional learning need such as dyslexia.
- If needed tutors can work 1-1 with participants who need extra support to complete courses.
- Some procured courses such as CSCS tests can be administered in other languages such as Polish.
- All tutors embed Welsh in the workshops and courses that are delivered at Compass
- The offer of work-related licenses enables people with low skill levels to have an opportunity to gain a qualification and improve their circumstances.
- Community open days to encourage all nationalities to attend the centre with their families such as the construction open day and learning fiesta.
- As there is limited disabled access at Compass, workshops and courses can also be delivered in other accessible locations such as the Town Centre Hub.
- Through our ex-offender mentor, support is provided for ex-offenders to help them to improve their circumstances and decrease their risk of reoffending.
- Compass has a disability employment mentor who supports people with disabilities to sustain their employment or change career path. This works holistically with other specialist services such as DWP to ensure the person has multi agency support.
- Data shows that a wide age range has accessed Compass over the last 12 months with the youngest being 16 and the oldest 82. This is due to a diverse marketing plan which ensures people can access program information whether this is printed or via social media.
- Learning through the Outdoors provides support to anyone with a mental health condition to encourage them to improve their wellbeing through engaging in outdoor activities.
- Learner participation in a focus group being held at Compass for the BBC on the impact of digital exclusion to monitor the impact on older people if TV / radio services are solely online.
- Free sims cards which include data, calls and texts being issued to people who are socially excluded working in partnership with the Good Things Foundation
- Menopause cafes have been held at Compass.
- "Conversation clubs" being set up where non English speakers can practise their English language skills.
- Demographic data shows an even split of male / females engaging at Compass.

Employment status of participants

Below shows a percentage breakdown of participants employment status. The unemployed category includes 222 individuals who have identified as economically inactive.

Total of 1010 participants:

Employment Status	Figure	% Enrolled
Employed	390	38.61%
Unemployed	589	58.32%
Full Time Education	31	3.07%

Gender

Traditionally there has been a higher percentage of females engaged in learning and training on previous projects. Compass has engaged with a higher percentage of males over the last 12 months. This may be due to the type of work-related vocational licenses being offered such as CSCS, Personal Track Safety and dumper / roller training. 1 person identified as other.

Gender	Figures	% Enrolled
Male	545	53.96%
Female	464	45.94%
Other	1	0.10%

Age ranges

Compass Community Hub has reached a wide range of ages over the length of the project to date. The total number of sign-ups to projects from 1st of April 2024 to 31st of March 2025 was 1010. The oldest person who has engaged with Compass has been 82.

Disabilities

14.75% of participants have identified as having a disability. This has seen an increase most recently due to the recruitment of a disability employment mentor who supports individuals with disabilities in work, to improve their circumstances at work.

Qualifications

Compass has helped people with lower-level skills access free training and support to enhance their skills and improve their employment circumstances. 74% of our participants only hold a qualification at a level 2 or below (equivalent to a GCSE). A high percentage 28.02% didn't hold any qualification before accessing Compass.

Previous Qualification before enrolment	Figures	% Enrolled
None	283	28.02%
N/A	1	0.10%
Other	258	25.54%
GCSE	203	20.10%
A LEVEL	36	3.56%
BA	24	2.38%
BSC	17	1.68%
BTEC	33	3.27%
DEGREE	52	5.15%
DIPLOMA	25	2.48%
HND	10	0.99%
NVQ	51	5.05%
PGCE	17	1.68%

Nationality

Due to the inclusive nature of the project, we have seen an increase in ethnic minorities who access Compass based on previous grant funded projects.

Nationality	Figure	% Enrolled
White	973	96.24%
Arab	2	0.20%
Asian Indian	9	0.89%
Asian Other	3	0.30%
Black	0	0%
Black African	12	1.27%
Black Caribbean	3	0.30%
Mixed - Asian & White	4	0.40%
Mixed - Black African & White	2	0.20%
Mixed - Black Caribbean & White	1	0.10%
Other	1	0.10%

Homelessness

Strong links with the Housing department and access to a Core Provision Tenancy Support course has enabled us to support individuals who identify as homeless. 57 participants (5.6%) who have signed up to Compass have indicated that they are homeless.

Suffering from homelessness	Figures	% Enrolled
Y	57	5.64%
N	953	94.36%

Theme: Accessible Services

Objective: Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing our services

More services are being accessed digitally which allows citizens to be more engaged, empowered and allows us to reach more people. However, we need to consider mechanisms for reaching all members of the community. Ensuring that there are clear readable formats for service users and ensuring that digital access is appropriate and encompasses all needs whenever possible.

Accessibility

Digital accessibility is a critical process that ensures all digital products, including websites, mobile apps, documents, and online tools, are usable by everyone, regardless of any impairments they may have. It is essential for ensuring that all users can access the same information online, promoting inclusivity and eliminating barriers.

As a Local Authority, our responsibility is to make our web content and design user-friendly and straightforward so that most people can navigate and use it without the need for adaptations. However, it is equally important that our website supports those who do require adjustments due to various impairments, such as impaired vision, motor difficulties, cognitive impairments, learning disabilities, deafness, or hearing impairments. This commitment extends to ensuring that our digital assets are accessible not only to people with disabilities but also to other groups, including older individuals.

Over the past few years, we have been committed to ensuring that we make our services more accessible, and ensuring we have dedicated resources available to encourage others to write more accessible documents, use more accessible language and remove barriers for people accessing our services. We commit to compliance to the Accessibility Regulations.

We continue to add to our signposting page on our intranet to provide staff with information, training links, and 'how to' guides for creating accessible documents.

Silktide Score

The Silktide software (a software package used to help identify and rectify issues on our corporate website including spelling and grammar mistakes, accessibility compliance, and unstructured documents) continues to be used. We remain one of the highest rated UK Council website for accessibility with a joint 1st place and we continue to have an accessible score of 100% (as of April 2025)

Recite Me Toolbar

We continue to use the Recite Me Toolbar on our Corporate Website and other domains. The Recite Me toolbar has been a positive and welcome addition, making the website digitally inclusive by allowing visitors to customise the content so they can access and consume it in ways that work best for them. It supports a wide range of disabilities to aid website usability and reflect the needs of our communities.

The tool has successfully increased engagement by supporting people who have additional needs, and those who require languages other than English or Welsh.

MTCBC Digital Strategy

A digital strategy for MTCBC has been developed at a time when digital technology is increasingly important.

It is a forward-looking blueprint designed to modernise Council services, enhance operational efficiency, and deliver a seamless digital experience to residents. Informed by best practices recommended by Audit Wales, the strategy aligns with both local priorities and the Welsh Government's Digital Strategy, which emphasises digital inclusion, infrastructure, data-driven decision-making, and skill development.

The Digital Strategy 2025-2028 sets out the Council's vision, *"To build a digitally connected Merthyr Tydfil, where Council services are accessible, efficient, and designed around the needs of residents"*.

The key principles for this strategy are:

- Innovation – adopting modern technologies and exploring new ways of working.
- Data-driven – basing decisions on robust evidence and analysis.
- User-centric – prioritising the needs of users in every aspect of our work.
- Inclusivity – providing services that cater to diverse individual needs.
- Collaboration – fostering strong partnerships within and beyond the organisation.
- Security – ensuring systems and data are safeguarded.
- Sustainability – utilising digital technologies to support the Council's net-zero objectives.

Through structured initiatives like process automation, enhanced data integration, and robust cybersecurity, MTCBC aims to become a digitally mature council that meets the evolving needs of its community while actively supporting Wales' national digital transformation goals.

For more details on our accessibility efforts and progress, please refer to MTCBC's Accessibility Statement which is available on the Council's website. We are committed to ensuring that our digital presence is accessible to all, and we will continue to work towards this goal.

Theme: Equity of Pay

Objective: Ensure equity of pay across Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Equity of Pay

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) is a large employer with over 2,500 employees and operates within the public sector, and as such is required to report on its gender pay gap and gender bonus gap.

The gender pay gap is an equality measure to show the difference in earning between women and men.

As at 31st March 2024, the UK gender pay gap for MTCBC is 6.48 %.

The gender pay gap does not show the difference in pay for comparable jobs, unequal pay has been illegal since the introduction of the Equal Pay Act 1970.

Nationally whilst pay systems are important in determining pay equity, there are several other issues that are relevant in determining what women and men are paid.

These include occupational segregation; availability of full/part-time work in different occupational groups, e.g. lower paid job roles being mainly part-time whilst higher paid more senior roles being mainly full time; availability of family friendly policies and support and organisational culture.

Reporting on this helps us to understand the size and causes of any gender pay gaps and any issues that need to be addressed. It is also a measure to show the difference in earning between women and men.

The Council undertakes regular gender pay gap reporting. All jobs are evaluated using the Greater London Provincial Council scheme of Job Evaluation , which ensures pay and grading of job is fair and non-discriminatory. No personal information regarding the post holder is considered at this stage. As a result, the grading system is free of any unconscious bias. The grades and additional payment mechanisms in operation at the Council are provided on a gender-neutral basis. Therefore, there are no obvious discrepancies between genders during the reporting.

The Gender Pay Gap at Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council is relatively small and does not raise any significant concerns. The median gender pay gap is reported as 1.7%, indicating that men are paid only slightly more than women. Specifically, for every £1 a man earns, a woman earns £0.98. This shows that the gap while existent, is minimal and the Council is committed to addressing and understanding these figures to foster a culture of inclusion and fairness.

The Council has developed and will continue to develop policies, procedures and programmes of action to meet its legal and moral obligations in the area of equal opportunities and is committed to equal opportunities in all aspects of employment

The full Gender Pay Gap Statement 2023-2024 can be found on the Council website.

Workforce Data

Data is vital in ensuring that we can monitor trends, identify areas for improvement and assess where we were, where we are and where we would like to be.

We have been reviewing our equalities monitoring form to ensure that it reflects the information required. We have also developed an equalities monitoring form for consultations and engagement exercises to ensure we receive a representative sample of responses, and to ensure we hear the views and lived experiences of our communities.

As a part of this, we are also reviewing internal monitoring of data and how we can best identify where improvements may need to be made. We encourage staff to complete this data and promote that this data is used not only in line with our duties but to ensure we are providing the best services we can to our workforce.

The information below shows the workforce data as of 31 March 2025.

Overall Staff Data

Employed staff at the Council as of 31 March 2025

Number of staff in post = 2487, of which:

Permanent	Fixed Term	Full Time	Part Time
1983	504	1524	963

Age

16-34	35-54	55-64	65+	TOTAL
550	1383	488	66	2487

Gender

Male	Female	TOTAL
621	1866	2487

Disability

Deaf/Hard of Hearing	Mental Health Difficulties	Mobility Impairment	Learning Impairment	Long-Standing Illness	Visual Impairment
10	10	5	3	32	1

Other	No Disability	Prefer not to Answer/Not Known	TOTAL
60	1951	415	2487

Sexual Orientation

Gay Woman/Lesbian	Gay Man	Bisexual	Heterosexual/Straight	Other	Prefer not to Answer/Not Known	TOTAL
25	18	15	2008	2	419	2487

Religion

Christianity	No Religion	Buddhism	Judaism	Islamic	Hinduism	OTHER	Prefer not to Answer/Not Known	TOTAL
588	1195	6	1	7	1	59	630	2487

Ethnicity

White British	White/ Other	Asian	Black African	Black OTHER	Mixed Race	Prefer not to Answer/Not Known	TOTAL
1977	45	12	2	1	3	447	2487

First Language

English	Welsh	Arabic	Greek	Polish	Russian	Portuguese	Tamil	Hungarian	Romanian
1808	31	1	1	14	1	2	1	1	2
Spanish	Urdu	Thai	Prefer not to Answer/Not Known			TOTAL			
1	1	1	622			2487			

Applications (as of 31st March 2025)

- Total number of jobs advertised = **248**
- Total number of job applications = **2491**
- Total number of online applications = **2237**

Internal Applications (as of 31st March 2025)

- Total number of internal applications = **2177**
- Male = **632**
- Female = **1545**

Agency Applications (as of 31st March 2025)

- Total number of internal applications = **15**
- Male = **14**
- Female = **1**

Procurement

The Council considers it essential that all organisations wishing to provide goods or services on its behalf can demonstrate that all reasonable and practicable steps are taken to allow equal access and equal treatment in employment, service delivery and training for all.

The Council uses the Single Procurement Document (SPD) blended with appropriate supplier qualification questions and has added its own specific equalities related questions to it. The SPD was superseded following the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023 in February 24 to the Welsh Procurement Specific Questionnaire (WPSQ) which includes Equalities, Ethical Employment, Modern Slavery and Employment Practices questions. The Council's standard Invitation to Tender (ITT) template includes a specific equalities statement with the inclusion of contract clauses relating to the Equality Act 2010 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. Equalities and Welsh Language related clauses to its standard terms and conditions for contracts are added when required.

The Council underpins the principles of the Welsh Procurement Policy Statement 2021 (WPPS) and its ten main themes through a fit for purpose procurement strategy that provides strategic direction and coordination to comply with corporate priorities and the WPPS. The WPPS includes themes such as Economic, Social and Environmental Impacts, Community Benefits and Open, Accessible Competition.

The Equalities and Welsh language elements of the Procurement Process in relation to Tendering and Request for Quote Documentation have been reviewed in line with the Equality Act 2010, (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

These documents support the Council in ensuring that all third-party suppliers demonstrate compliance with these requirements, where relevant, to the nature and type of goods and services being provided on its behalf.

The Council is a signatory of the Ethical Employment in Supply Chains Code of Practice. Modern Slavery, Blacklisting and Employment Practices have been incorporated into the pre-qualification/selection stage questionnaires for all applicable tender activity.

Welsh Language tenders

In line with our provisions for equalities and the Welsh Language, the Welsh Language will be treated no less favourably than the English language. If a request for a Welsh tender document is received during a tender process, the process will be paused to allow time for a translation. Once the translated document(s) is received, the translated document(s) will be communicated and the process will commence with the addition of the number of days it took to create the translation, ensuring that there is no additional benefit to those tenderers using the English version of the ITT (and supporting documents). Standard procurement templates are available in Welsh. All official procurement notices are published in Welsh and English on the Central Digital Platform.

Modern Slavery Statement

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council recognises it has a responsibility as an employer and procurer/commissioner of services to ensure slavery and human trafficking does not exist within its supply chains or in any part of its own business.

We continue to review and publish an updated Modern Slavery Statement to demonstrate our public commitment to play our collaborative part in reducing modern slavery and human trafficking, including through effective partnership working (prevention, identification, awareness raising, information sharing and enforcement).

The statement highlights the steps we take to ensure our suppliers adhere to the highest standards of ethics. The statement covers a 12-month period and is reviewed/updated every year.

MTCBCs Modern Slavery statement can be viewed on the Council website.

Next Steps

We remain committed to our equalities vision and continue to be proactive in ensuring that we eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, fostering good relations and advancing equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not.

We will continue to review how we collect, monitor and use our data, ensuring that our equalities monitoring form is included in our consultations, and raising awareness of the importance of collecting data and using it to make better informed decisions.

We review our Integrated Impact Assessment annually and this will continue. Any further changes will be made and communicated where necessary.

We will continue to raise awareness where possible in our equalities calendar and also through specific awareness raising posts throughout the year.

We will continue to develop training around equalities generally, and raise awareness of training opportunities through our training platforms e.g. skillshub.

We will continue to review and improve our recruitment and encouraging more diverse applicants. In doing this, also reviewing our job application forms and the questions we ask, ensuring that we include questions relating to, for example, neurodiversity to ensure fair interviews.

We want to maintain our Silktide Accessibility Index score as being joint 1st on the index out of all UK Councils, and making our services more accessible, by producing easy read versions and promoting the importance of this.

We want to continue to ensure there is a joint approach to delivering our equality vision and objectives across the Local Authority and with partners, plus Introduce more training on topics to all staff where possible.

We will continue to horizon scan and ensure we are involved in any consultations on any action plans being developed by Welsh Government and wider. Any action plans developed will be reviewed and relevant actions included within our SEP.

We will continue to voice the importance of equalities in all our work, working with departments when writing new policies, plans and strategies, to ensure the needs and views of our communities are considered.

Contact Details

We welcome comments on the report and if you would like to know more about the work the Council is doing, or require the report in another format please use the contact details below:



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