

MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY
BOROUGH COUNCIL

ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT

2019-2020



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

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FOREWORD

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) is pleased to introduce the fourth Annual Report for its Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020. This Strategic Equality Plan was prepared in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and was approved by Council on 23rd March 2016.

Through the Strategic Equality Plan this Annual Equality Report for 2019-2020 is 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 well-being of the County Borough.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) 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. The majority 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 new 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 (Gender)
- 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

Strategic Equality Plan

The specific duties in Wales included a requirement for listed bodies to develop and publish a Strategic Equality Plan every four years.

As part of the review of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan it was identified that an Equalities Vision for Merthyr Tydfil was essential in order to set out the Council's ambition to eliminate discrimination / harassment, advance equality and foster good relations.

The following Equalities Vision for Merthyr Tydfil has been developed.

Our Equalities Vision for Merthyr Tydfil 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.”

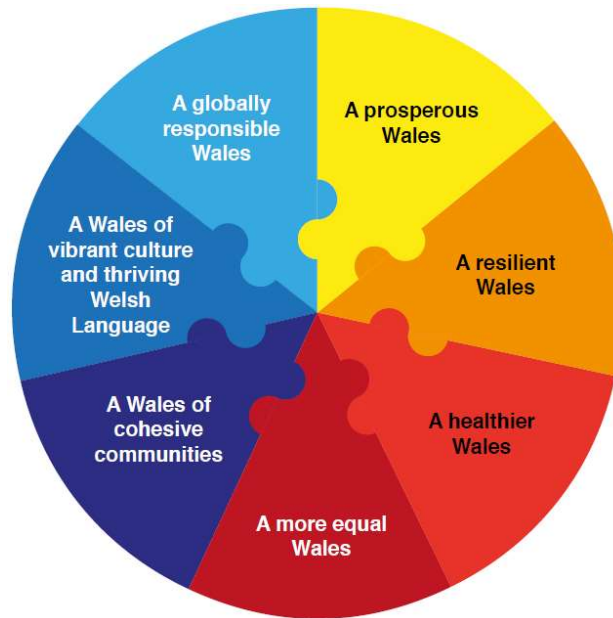
This Vision is supported by the following four Equality Objectives (listed in the table below) that are set out in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020. The Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020 was approved by Council on 23rd March 2016.

Themes	Equality Objectives
Community Engagement	<u>Equality Objective 1</u> Put Citizens' voices at the heart of local decision making so that their contribution is understood, recognised and used to help the Council understand and respond to the needs of its communities.
Equality Awareness Raising	<u>Equality Objective 2</u> To support and facilitate Equalities training and learning opportunities so that staff at all levels, Councillors and partners recognise and incorporate Equalities as part of their role.
Understanding our Staff and Communities	<u>Equality Objective 3</u> Develop robust monitoring systems to collect, collate, monitor and publish equalities data on our employees and customers, which will help the Council to ensure that it provides fair and accessible services.
Gender/Equal Pay	<u>Equality Objective 4</u> Ensure equity of pay across Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

These Equality Objectives will be delivered through an Action Plan that is set out in the Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Council's Vision and Equality Objectives for 2016-2020 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.



Long term



The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.

Prevention



How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.

Integration



Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.

Collaboration



Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.

Involvement



The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AGAINST DELIVERING THE COUNCIL'S EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

Progress against delivering the Council's Equality Objectives for 2019-2020 have been as follows:

Hate Crime/Discrimination

We continue to regularly engage with groups vulnerable to harassment and/or experiencing community tensions, particularly in relation to Brexit. Groups such as EU citizens, BAME communities and other protected characteristic groups. During 2019 all ethnic minority owned businesses, every library and every medical surgery across the Cwm Taf region were visited by the Community Cohesion Officers to engage with any vulnerable community members. Officers spoke with staff about engaging with any minority/vulnerable person or group that they may encounter. They also spoke to them about the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), hate crime and left information posters for display in their premises.

Community Cohesion stalls are held in local areas of interest on a regular basis, sometimes in partnership with the Community Safety Team. This allows the profile of the Community Cohesion team to be raised and to engage in conversation with local people about cohesion. Regular contact is made with key figures within the local communities and we explore any concerns they raise.

Protected Services Group (PSG) meetings are attended on a monthly basis across Cwm Taf where information is shared between a number of different partners regarding hate crime and community tensions. This allows us to put together a multi-agency approach to combat issues. The Cohesion team also held meetings with the Independent Police and Crime Commissioner's newly appointed Equality and Diversity Officer. Discussions were held around what the team have been doing and what areas could use further attention and more engagement.

For National Hate Crime Awareness Week in October 2019, a week of events and engagement was arranged to raise awareness and encourage the reporting of hate crime. There were a total of 29 events held across the Cwm Taf region. A total of 451 residents took part in our hate crime surveys and we engaged with a much greater number on a more informal basis. Officers also appeared on a local radio station, GTFM, during prime time to discuss hate crime, how to report it and to promote the roadshows being held across MTCBC and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council (RCTCBC). The prime time slot has an average of 40,000 listeners and GTFM have over 20,000 followers on social media. The week culminated with televised events held at both Pontypridd RFC and Merthyr RFC. Both clubs printed information regarding National Hate Crime Awareness Week in their programmes. Photographs were also taken with the football team, the cohesion team members, elected members and South Wales Police (SWP) with the 'Be Heard' banner. We worked alongside SWP to display the 'Pride' car at two key locations across Cwm

Taf. This received a lot of interest from the public and started many positive conversations around hate crime.

Churches in the Cwm Taf area were contacted and three included a written message in their weekly newsletter regarding hate crime and how to report it.

The Council continues to monitor community tensions. The work involved includes:

- Working closely with SWP to monitor tensions and create consistent positive messages through the media.
- Making regular contact with key individuals/partner agencies from a variety of communities to gauge feelings and tension levels. During times of significant events, such as religious festivals, our Community Cohesion team works alongside partner agencies and the community to support, reassure and protect the public.
- Collating and sharing details of incidents and situations likely to impact upon community tensions. Also to consider future events which have the potential to raise tensions. These might include planned local demonstrations by extremist groups, cultural events, sporting fixtures, or national and international events.
- Attending Local 'Partners and Communities Together' (PACT) meetings across Cwm Taf where links with local community groups and members have been established. We continue to keep in touch with the Police Community Support Officers running the groups on a regular basis to keep an eye on any community tensions.
- Providing regular tension monitoring reports through agreed channels, including regular summaries to the Welsh Government.
- A Community Cohesion Group meeting is held every three months, and any possible arising tensions are discussed. Hate crime figures and data over the past three and six month periods are monitored to identify any possible trends or hotspots. A SWP report is also produced for all members showing figures and data captured. Victim Support and Show Racism the Red Card also sit on this group, so all figures are compared from multiple sources to gain a more inclusive picture.
- Holding weekly meetings with the Community Safety Team in SWP to discuss any possible tensions.
- Holding weekly "Team Huddles" between Community Safety Teams within the Local Authorities to discuss any issues.
- Holding weekly team meetings with the Community Cohesion Coordinator and Community Cohesion Officers in order to share details of any emerging incidents, particularly as preparations are made for possible tensions on the day of the UK leaving the EU.
- Hate crime awareness stalls/stands in colleges and public places are being used to engage with the community across Cwm Taf to reassure the public, promote available support services and monitor tensions.

Brexit

In 2019 we started conducting mapping exercises across the whole of the County Borough to better understand our community and to help us prepare for the possible impacts of Brexit on our communities.

Developing an effective engagement strategy enabled us to better capture the wide range of community members.

We worked with partner agencies to conduct this mapping exercise:

- Some Registered Social Landlords (RSL) operating within the Local Authority provided us with nationality data of their tenants. This has aided us in working with the RSL's, to ask them to distribute information to the support workers, and by putting information on their Facebook & websites pages.
- Data of employee nationalities was received from Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.
- We also gathered ethnic minority data from schools within Merthyr Tydfil.
- Department for Work and Pensions and Citizens Advice Bureau were contacted for nationality data.
- Councillors were approached to ask for data on nationalities within their wards.

All of the above helped us to identify minority individuals and groups within Local Authority wards, and helped us to engage with minority communities to understand their concerns, particularly around Brexit.

Engagement also took place with local employers to share concerns around any EU nationals they may employ. We continue to work with them; to provide as much information and support to them and their employees so they can remain working in the UK via the EU Settlement Scheme. All EUSS Support Services were contacted when engaging with local major employers and partnership working has been positive in this area.

EU Citizens Rights project

MTCBC has produced maps of the community. These maps have been used by the Community Cohesion team to help hold stalls and engagement events in the best places in order to get the most engagement from EU citizens so we can offer advice and support on the EUSS scheme.

Engagement events have been held and will continue to be held throughout the Cwm Taf region. Event venues have included local hospitals, community hubs, supermarkets, school engagement evenings, business forums, over 50s forums, college open evenings, job centres, libraries, leisure centres, third sector forums,

Registered Social Landlords (RSL) offices, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes and local factories.

A drop in session was also arranged by the cohesion team to take place at Citizens Advice Bureau in Merthyr Tydfil. This involved Newfields Law occupying a room there to help with applications for the EUSS.

A EUSS engagement evening event was arranged at a local Portuguese tapas bar in Merthyr Tydfil. This was in partnership with EYST (Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team) and attended by the cohesion team and the EUSS project worker from the Mental Health Charity 'MIND'. The event included giving out advice and booking appointments for applications. Refreshments and entertainment were provided in order to promote cohesion in the local area.

Regular contact was made with major EU employers in order to offer EUSS support services. Plus up to date EUSS information was provided and shared on all of the social media platforms across Cwm Taf.

Community Groups and Events

A Health and Wellbeing forum has been set up and is attended on a bi-monthly basis at Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil. From this meeting, links are established with local community groups that are part of the protected characteristics.

The Merthyr Tydfil Global Village Festival this year took place on 24th August 2019. The festival was established in 2005 to celebrate the cultural diversity and heritage of Merthyr Tydfil through workshops, music, dance and art. The festival allows individuals, community groups and others to work towards some common goals: the celebration of diversity, the broadening of cultural horizons, the welcoming of new people to the town and the promotion of a positive image of the County Borough.

Modern Day Slavery

A Welsh organisation called BAWSO, which provides advice and support to Ethnic Minority women, was funded to come into MTCBC to deliver modern day slavery training to all frontline staff who may encounter potential victims in their role. This included the Community Safety Team, Social Services, Environmental Health, Planning, Trading Standards and Licensing. It was very well received and we are now looking to develop an online learning module about modern day slavery after the success of the BAWSO training.

We regularly engage with businesses in the Local Authority such as takeaways, car washes and nail bars. Internal departments such as Environmental Health and Trading Standards also work closely to share intelligence. Engagement has centred on local businesses with a high intake of EU staff, to raise awareness of modern day slavery. In the future we will look to link this with the EU Citizens Rights Project.

MTCBC is currently looking in to developing an E-learning module for its staff around awareness of modern day slavery and how to report any concerns via the Local Authority Intranet. This is currently in the early development stage.

Schools

MTCBC continues to support all of our schools to tackle bullying on the grounds of protected characteristics. We work closely with Hate Crime Officers and the schools to tackle hate related bullying. This is in partnership with other organisations such as Show Racism the Red Card.

Throughout 2019-2020, all schools within the Local Authority were offered Hate Crime Awareness training for both staff and pupils. Training started in September 2019 and was to continue for the remaining school year. This was originally set up by Cohesion Officers working with MTCBC. However, with limited officer capacity, it was more beneficial for the Hate Crime in Schools project to be delivered using third sector organisations with more expertise. Race Equality First was commissioned to deliver hate crime workshops within schools to educate and empower young people with regards to hate and discrimination. We worked with training and education officers at Race Equality First beforehand in order to share information on local schools and to have an input on the workshops.

A hate crime training package has been developed for MTCBC and is being delivered to both primary and secondary schools across the County Borough. Special assemblies were also delivered to all four secondary schools in Merthyr Tydfil to raise awareness of hate crime.

An 'Equality Champion' programme has been put together (due to run in the Easter holidays 2020) and includes young people aged 14-19 receiving specialised training about the protected characteristics. These young people will then go on to their respective colleges, schools and youth forums and put together events, deliver training and run engagement sessions surrounding any of the protected characteristic groups. Training will be delivered by Spectacle Theatre Group, Show Racism the Red Card and Stonewall.

On 18th October 2019, school pupils in the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough were asked to wear red in support of the anti-racism education charity 'Show Racism the Red Card'.

On 21st June 2019, Council staff and school pupils were encouraged to participate in the Cystic Fibrosis Trust's 'Wear Yellow Day'. Money raised was donated towards groundbreaking drugs for the cure of Cystic Fibrosis.

Ethnic Minorities

The Council has met with EYST (Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team) to further discuss how MTCBC can engage with BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) communities across the County Borough. The EYST is an award winning voluntary organisation which was set up to support ethnic minority people in Wales.

Windrush Day was celebrated on 22nd June 2019; the same date as the arrival of around 500 migrants from the Caribbean to the UK in 1948. Grant funding was available from Welsh Government for community groups to bid into to hold celebrations/education events to commemorate Windrush day. Up to £5,000 was allocated to every region across Wales for a BAME group to bid for the grant. Race Council Cymru successfully obtained the grant and ran engagement programmes across six schools in the Cwm Taf region; three in Merthyr Tydfil and three in Rhondda Cynon Taf. In Merthyr Tydfil the three schools chosen were Ysgol Santes Tudfel, Afon Taf High School and Cyfarthfa High School.

On 27th July 2019, Race Council Cymru held the Windrush & Black History Arts Event 2019 in the Engine House in Merthyr Tydfil. This free event is incredibly important in giving a platform and a voice to black and minority ethnic individuals in Merthyr Tydfil.

LGBTQ+ Community

Proud Councils

MTCBC and other Councils in South Wales are part of the 'Proud Councils' network, which involves working in a visible and unified way to promote equality, diversity and support the LGBTQ+ community. The Councils involved are Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Cardiff, Newport, Caerphilly, Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent and Bridgend.

The purpose of 'Proud Councils' is to improve support offered to LGBTQ+ staff within Local Authorities in Wales, and ensure that local government across Wales is a visible leader in the field of LGBTQ+ rights and actively championing LGBTQ+ inclusion in our communities. Being part of the 'Proud Councils' network highlights MTCBC's commitment to promoting respect and diversity in our communities, and ensuring our public services work to deliver to everyone regardless of their sexuality, gender identity, age, race, disability or religion.

Pride Cymru 2019

The Council was proud to actively take part in Pride Cymru's Big Weekend event in the summer for the fourth consecutive year. The event ran over 2 days on the 24th and 25th August 2019. The event is a great arena for engaging with the LGBTQ+ community to find out what issues are important to them.

At the Big Weekend event, all 'Proud Councils' marched together in the Pride Cymru parade through Cardiff City Centre to visibly show their commitment and support. 'Proud Councils' also had a stall, engaging with visitors to discuss how Councils can improve upon service delivery, access and inclusion, and prevent discrimination for the LGBTQ+ community.

To celebrate Pride Cymru and to show the Council's support, the Rainbow Flag was raised outside the Civic Centre.

LGBT History Month

A flag-raising event was held outside the Civic Centre on 10th February 2020 to celebrate Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) History Month as part of the Council's commitment to supporting and engaging with the LGBTQ+ community within Merthyr Tydfil. Members of the LGBTQ+ community raised each of the four flags: the gay, bisexual, transsexual and non-gender flags. This year's theme was Poetry, Prose and Plays. Its primary focus was teaching young people about the gay rights movement and working to put a stop to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. The event was attended by the Mayor, our local Member of Parliament, Councillors and Council Staff, South Wales Police, Stonewall Cymru's Director plus members of the Youth Cabinet and Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum (MTBWYF). The event was attended by over 50 people.

The College Merthyr Tydfil hosted a gathering with students, staff and other allies to celebrate LGBT History Month. South Wales Police was in attendance, showcasing their rainbow coloured 'pride' car at the front of the college. The college invited partner agencies to set up stalls to offer information on their work and to raise awareness of equalities and hate crime.

Awareness stalls were also present in Prince Charles Hospital and Royal Glamorgan Hospital. At Merthyr Tydfil Central Library, LGBTQ+ authors and writers held a display of their work with a Q&A session plus an 'Equali-tea' event was held at Coleg Y Cwmoedd Nantgarw Campus.

MTCBC sent information out to all staff to raise awareness of the Pride Cymru event 'leap into sight' which was held in the Senedd in Cardiff on 29th February 2020. It was a day of historical talks, discussions, film and entertainment in celebration of LGBT History Month 2020. 'Proud Councils' attended this event to raise awareness of the Proud Council Network.

International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia

International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT) was celebrated on 17th May 2019. It is celebrated around the world on the same date every year to bring attention to the discrimination and violence LGBTQ+ people still face, as well as to recognise advancements in LGBTQ+ equality. The 17th May was chosen to celebrate IDAHOT as it commemorates the World Health Organisation's decision to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1990.

To celebrate IDAHOT day, MTCBC held a flag raising ceremony outside the Civic Centre where both the Rainbow and Transgender flags were raised.

Gypsy Roma Traveller Community

The Cohesion team continue to work closely with the Gypsy Roma Traveller officer in Merthyr Tydfil and regularly engage onsite with the Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) community.

The Cohesion team have funded a parallel literacy project which involves a group of young people from the GRT community and a group of young people from the village close to their site. They will write a book and record a song based on their experience of living in the area and then will come together at the end of the project in order to look at their differences and similarities. We are hoping this will lead to further projects within the community.

All Cohesion Officers received up to date GRT awareness training, so they are better equipped when they engage with the GRT community.

Officers from MTCBC attended a meeting with the new GRT division in Welsh Government to discuss issues on the site and the plans moving forward. Officers also attended the Cross Party Group Gypsy & Traveller Meeting on 25th June 2019.

Welsh Language

The Council has developed a Welsh Language Programme structured around compliance with the Standards, translation and promotion of the Welsh language.

Working in partnership with the Welsh Language Training Unit at Cardiff City Council, a Welsh language customer telephone and greeting training course has been developed. The aim of the course is to upskill MTCBC staff to support the Council's provision of Welsh language services to the communities of Merthyr Tydfil. During 2019-2020, thirteen members of front-line staff received this training. This has been enhanced with our Customer Service Agents undertaking Level 1 Welsh to reinforce previous learning. As part of the ongoing upskilling of staff the Council will continue to roll out this training within the Council's training programme for Welsh language. This was training organised by the Grwp Deddf Local Authorities.

As part of the Council's Welsh Language continuous improvement programme and self-regulation work for compliance with the Standards, a mystery shopper project was developed (working in partnership with Menter Iaith Merthyr Tudful – collaboration). It was first undertaken in 2017 and again in early 2019. The findings were analysed and areas for improvement are being used to inform the Council's Welsh Language Programme and other related strategies going forward. A third mystery shopper project will take place later in the year.

The Council continues to work in partnership with Dysgu Cymraeg Morgannwg (Learn Welsh Glamorgan) to provide workplace training opportunities for staff and Councillors. This includes an ongoing promotional campaign to encourage staff and Councillors to undertake Welsh language training opportunities via drop-in sessions, through the intranet, by email, and taster sessions. The Council currently has fourteen members of staff learning Welsh in the workplace ranging from entry level to intermediate level 1 and 2. In 2019, nine members of staff successfully achieved the WJEC Entry Certificate in Welsh Second Language: The Use of Welsh. Some Council learners have also taken part in the Cynllun Siarad /

Speaking project (as part of the Council's provision of Welsh language workplace training opportunities). This is a project to help learners gain confidence in using the language outside of the working environment. This project has progressed well; informal feedback from learners has shown that they really appreciate the experience and they have benefited from being part of this initiative. Working in partnership with Dysgu Cymraeg Morgannwg we also continue to provide ongoing social opportunities for learners to listen and practice using Welsh. Previously, learners of the Council have assisted Dysgu Cymraeg Morgannwg with the marketing of courses and offer any support to promote the Welsh language throughout the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil. Some learners working at the Council also regularly enrol on additional Welsh language classes and take part in a Welsh speaking group that meet up for walks around Cyfarthfa Park in Merthyr Tydfil.

To support staff and Councillors learning Welsh and to promote the Welsh language, the Council has developed a Welsh word / phrase of the fortnight initiative. The short Welsh phrases appear on computer screens every fortnight designed to help staff and Councillors learn basic business Welsh, and they are encouraged to practice the Welsh phrases with colleagues, friends and family.

Urdd School Eisteddfod Success 2019

The National Urdd Eisteddfod 2019 Cardiff and the Vale took place in May 2019. First and Second Language Schools participated in the local and county district. It was great to see Merthyr Tydfil County Borough being represented at national level.

Our schools achieved magnificent success in reaching the stage, the results of which can be seen below

- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Santes Tudful – Mixed Medium Dance (3rd place).
- Ysgol Uwchardd Pen y Dre - Learners Dialogue year 7 – 9 (1st place).
- Ysgol Uwchradd Pen y Dre - Individual recitation for Learners year 10 and below 19 years old for learners (3rd place).

Two members of the Community were honoured into the Gorsedd Bardd in August 2019 for their contribution to the Welsh Language in Merthyr Tydfil. The honours, presented annually, provide an opportunity to recognise individuals from all parts of the country for their achievements and commitment to Wales, the Welsh language and their local communities.

Working Skills for Adults 2

Working Skills for Adults 2 is a project that has been supported by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government. The project is aimed at upskilling people across a variety of free accredited courses. During the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020, Working Skills for Adults 2 delivered accredited Welsh language skills training to 36 individuals in Merthyr Tydfil. Training has also been provided for individuals who work at The College Merthyr Tydfil and Cwm Taf Morgannwg

University Health Board. 21 people have completed the Welsh reception skills course and 15 people have completed Welsh nursery skills.

In addition to this, Working Skills for Adults 2 working in partnership with Adult Community Learning in Merthyr Tydfil delivered the Welsh reception skills course to forty learners at The College Merthyr Tydfil.

Welsh Language Coffee Morning

The Council have been working with staff at the Neighbourhood Learning Centre in Merthyr Tydfil to hold a coffee morning once a month for learners and staff who have lost their confidence to speak the language. It is an informal event where staff members speak about hobbies and social events. This has proven to be very successful and it is hoped that it can be rolled out in other departments of the Council.

MTCBC Welsh Language Champions Group

In October 2019, a Welsh Language Champions group was established for staff members of the Council. The purpose is to share ideas of good practice to see how departments can implement the Welsh Language Standards and discuss any issues in relation to the Welsh Language. Welsh language desk stands were created to help staff with basic phrases and to give them the confidence to speak the language. It is now general practice to open meetings in Welsh and the use of the Welsh language in all forms is encouraged by Senior Managers and Councillors alike.

Grwp Deddf

The Council is an active member of Grŵp Deddf and officers regularly attend their meetings. Grŵp Deddf is a voluntary group consisting of Welsh Language Officers for public sector bodies who come under the compliance requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. The aim of Grŵp Deddf is to discuss and share information and good practice on Welsh language.

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP)

The Council has a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) for 2017-2020 that is supported by an Action Plan. The WESP sets out seven outcomes, the delivery of which are monitored by the Council's WESP Forum.

Community Work and Events

During August 2019, children in Merthyr Tydfil were given the opportunity to enjoy Welsh activities during a Family Fun Day. This was the twelfth Family Fun Day at the Cwm Golau Integrated Children's Centre (ICC) in Merthyr Tydfil, and as in previous years was a great success. The day was supported by key partners, allowing opportunities for fun and family engagement. The Welsh activities were run in efforts to support the Council's Welsh Language Promotional Strategy and attracted 1,153 people. The event was attended by a number of children from Ysgol Gymraeg Rhyd-Y-Grug and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Santes Tudful in Merthyr Tydfil, as well as

children who attend Ti a Fi provisions within the County Borough. Menter Iaith Merthyr Tudful also participated in the activity.

In December 2019, a Santa's Grotto event took place at the ICC and children were offered the opportunity to receive a Welsh book as their gift.

We continue to support, along with the Council's Cabinet Member for Community Regeneration and Public Protection, a weekly community Welsh class in the village of Heolgerrig in Merthyr Tydfil. The class encourages the whole community to come along and learn, practice, improve or use their Welsh in a sociable and welcoming environment. The class has its own volunteering tutor who facilitates the classes and promotes awareness and understanding of the culture and history of the Welsh language locally and nationally.

In line with promoting the Welsh Language, on the 15th October 2019 the Council organised a 'Diwrnod Shw'mae Su'mae' event. The event focused on Welsh Medium Education where Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Rhyd-y-Grug and Santes Tudful participated by performing Welsh Medium items. This event was organised through working in partnership with Cymraeg Byd Buses, Menter Iaith Merthyr Tudful and Dysgu Cymraeg Morgannwg.

Working in Partnership with The College Merthyr Tydfil and Menter Iaith Merthyr Tudful, a St David's Day event was held on March 2nd at The College Merthyr Tydfil. Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Santes Tudful participated by performing items. The Deputy Welsh Language Commissioner was present to promote the Welsh Language. The Mayor, and Councillor Chris Davies (Welsh Language Champion for Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council) were also present.

Urdd Sports

The Council's Welsh Language Service and Active Merthyr Tydfil continue to work in partnership to support the Urdd Sports Team. The key purpose of the project is for the Welsh language to continue to become more prevalent in the community by providing a range of opportunities for children and young people to take part in sport and physical activity through the medium of Welsh. This will take the form of after school clubs, community clubs and holiday provision.

For 2019-2020, some of the key developments of the project included:

- After School Provision - There are five after school clubs in Merthyr Tydfil where a variety of sports are delivered each week – two in the Welsh language and three bilingually.
- Community Clubs - There are five community clubs in Merthyr Tydfil. These clubs are all run bilingually and are run from different venues across Merthyr Tydfil. During the summer term a tennis club was run for 10 weeks from Merthyr Tennis Club.
- Partnership Working - As part of the project there are partnerships in place with key stakeholders to provide opportunities to support and develop the

Welsh language. These include Menter Iaith Merthyr Tudful, Urdd, Welsh and English medium schools in Merthyr Tydfil, Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun, Active Merthyr Tydfil, The Youth Service and The College Merthyr Tydfil.

Feedback from the Commissioner

MTCBC has received positive feedback from the Welsh Language Commissioner in the report 'Rights in use The Welsh Language Commissioner's assurance report 2018-19'. MTCBC is recognised for the good work undertaken with partners including the work we have done with the local Menter Iaith and our work experience and further opportunities; *"Merthyr Tydfil CBC is working with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to identify opportunities for similar work in future."*

The Council's Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report for 2019-2020 was approved by Cabinet on 16th September 2020 and is available on the Council's website.

Insport (Disability Sport Wales)

MTCBC is currently an Insport Silver Local Authority in the Disability Sport Wales programme and throughout 2019-2020 we have continued to work towards the Gold level. Insport is a programme that challenges and supports organisations to be inclusive in their delivery of sport and physical activity.

As is stands, Merthyr Tydfil is one of only two Local Authorities in Wales to have presented to the Insport Gold pre-panel to set out their priorities for their submission.

We are currently supporting a number of local clubs to work through their relevant Insport levels, ensuring there is a range of inclusive opportunities across the County Borough.

We continued to pilot the Insport education programme with Disability Sport Wales; the only Local Authority in Wales to do so. There are currently four schools actively engaged in the programme.

Active Merthyr continues to support the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Society Cymru with the Active Together project, which runs across Merthyr, Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taf. The aim is supporting people with MS to be active. An MS specific National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS) programme was run in conjunction with Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre and a number of workshops and taster sessions have been supported by the Local Authority.

Active Merthyr supported the Bridging the Gap youth group to set up a specific after school sports club on a weekly basis. The club runs out of Greenfield School and sees external clubs and providers brought in to run specific sessions for Bridging the Gap members, with a view to developing relationships between Bridging the Gap and the community to support disabled members to access opportunities.

On 15th June 2019 in Abercynon Leisure Centre, a free Disability Sport Wales Cwm Taf Morgannwg Insport series event was held. It gave people the opportunity to try a range of sports and find out what's on across the Cwm Taf region, as well as meeting the Disability Sport teams in each Local Authority.

Armed Forces Covenant

Merthyr Tydfil has a proud record of valuing it's armed services, both serving and retired. Being part of The Armed Forces Covenant is our commitment to supporting our armed forces personnel and their families in a number of areas such as education, well-being, healthcare, employment, housing and financial assistance.

The Veteran Advice Officer (VAO) actively attends veteran groups within the Cwm Taf area. Also good relationships continue to grow with key organisations such as SSAFA (the Armed Forces Charity), The Royal British Legion and Change Step who offer support for veterans, their families and carers in Wales to access vital support services and to tackle stress and mental health related issues.

Quarterly meetings are held between MTCBC and three neighbouring Local Authorities to share good practices and ideas.

A drop-in advice surgery has been held in the MTCBC Civic Centre, to allow veterans or current service personnel to access free, impartial information and advice from the Veteran Advice Service. Feedback received was very positive. To engage with as many veterans and forces personnel as possible, and to raise awareness of services, marketing leaflets are distributed throughout the County Borough. Social media has also been a good advertising tool for making people aware of the service. People are signposted to the MTCBC website, which provides further information about the Veteran Advice Service.

Pop up advertisement banners have been created and placed in Council public areas such as Leisure Centres and ONE4ALL Centres. The VAO continues to attend local events to promote the service, and will continue to have a presence at key events.

To date:

- 301 referrals were received for the Cwm Taf area in 2019-2020. 86 of these were in Merthyr Tydfil.
- Majority of veterans accessing the service in Cwm Taf in 2019-2020 were male - 87%.
- 67% were in the Army and 43% are aged 51 to 70 years old.

On Monday 24th June 2019 the Armed Forces Flags were raised outside the Civic Centre. They were flown for the rest of the week until Armed Forces Day itself, which was Saturday 29th June 2019, to show appreciation for the contribution made by all those who serve or have served in Her Majesty's Armed Forces.

An afternoon tea dance was held on 11th May 2019 at St Tydfil's Church in Merthyr Tydfil, to remember D-Day 75 years on. All proceeds went to the Royal British

Legion poppy appeal and St Tydfil's Church fund. Also on Sunday 12th May a tree planting and remembrance service took place in St Tydfil's Church.

MTCBC was proud to have been selected to host the St David's Day Parade by 3rd Battalion The Royal Welsh on Saturday 29th February 2020. This prestigious event is to celebrate St David's Day and the Reaffirmation of the Freedom of the County Borough, which was granted to the regiment in 2011. The Regiment & Band marched through the town centre. The day of celebrations also included Welsh-themed food, crafts and gift stalls, military displays and stands. Plus live entertainment from Welsh tribute acts.

Holocaust Memorial Day

Holocaust Memorial Day was celebrated in Merthyr Tydfil on 27th January 2019 with a Holocaust Memorial Service at St Tydfil's Parish Church.

MTCBC worked in partnership with Wellbeing Merthyr to arrange the service and engagement event to celebrate 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz. This was attended by elected members, staff members, SWP and members of the local community. There were over 100 people in attendance.

EMPLOYEE AWARENESS

Information on the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty is available on the Council's Intranet and Internet for staff to view.

The Council has identified the following Equality Objective as part of its Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020, which will support the Council in continuing to raise awareness about Equalities:

To support and facilitate Equalities training and learning opportunities so that staff at all levels, Councillors and partners recognise and incorporate Equalities as part of their role.

Training and Continued Professional Development

Training and Continued Professional Development is a key element 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.

On 10th June 2019, the Council's Equalities Manager and Cohesion Coordinator provided Equality Awareness training, along with Hate Crime Awareness training to MTCBC's Senior Leadership Team, as it is an objective of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020. The aim of the training was to raise awareness about community cohesion, especially in light of potential implications of Brexit on communities in Merthyr Tydfil. Also it supports the Council in delivering its Strategic Equality Plan and in meeting the requirements of Stonewall's Education Equality Index.

In addition to this, an e-learning package about hate crime was developed and is due to be issued to all staff in the new financial year (2020-2021). It will be mandatory for every member of staff and elected members to complete the training with the aim of ensuring all staff understand what hate crime is and how to report it, should they ever need to.

MTCBC staff were encouraged to participate in 'Learning at Work Week' which ran from 13th-19th May 2019 on the theme 'shaping the future'. The week is a unique annual event to build learning cultures at work. It aims to put the spotlight on the importance and benefits of continual learning and development. As well as sessions like craft and music, workshops were held on Autism, Dementia, Drink Wise, Mindfulness and the Welsh Language.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board held a Celebration of Good Practice event on 15th May 2019, bringing together organisations from Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil & Bridgend. It was aimed at all professionals whose role involves safeguarding children, young people & adults; to share good practice, identify opportunities and to learn together.

WORKFORCE DATA

The Council has identified the following Equality Objective as part of its Strategic Equality Plan for 2016-2020, which supports the Council in understanding the profile of its employees:

- Develop robust monitoring systems to collect, collate, monitor and publish equalities data on our employees and customers, which will help the Council to ensure that it provides fair and accessible services.

Workforce data for the Council as at 31st March 2020 is attached as Appendix A.

PROCUREMENT

The Council considers it essential that all organisations wishing to provide goods or services on its behalf are able to 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 European Single Procurement Document (ESPD) blended with appropriate supplier qualification questions and has added its own specific equalities related questions to it. The Council's standard Invitation to Tender (ITT) templates 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 2015 (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 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.

STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2020 2024

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies to;

- Publish objectives to meet the general duty.
- Publish a statement setting out the steps it has taken or intends to take to meet the objectives and how long it expects to take to meet each objective.
- Make appropriate arrangements to monitor progress towards meeting its objectives and to monitor the effectiveness of its approach.
- Give appropriate consideration to relevant equality information it holds when considering what its equality objectives should be.

MTCBC's Strategic Equality Plan for the next four years (2020-2024) reflects our commitment to equality in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil, and ensures we are meeting our statutory obligations as found within the Equality Act 2010. The plan replaces the Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020 which was approved in March 2016.

It 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. This continues the work the Council is doing and promotes our commitment to ensuring that we have inclusive communities free from discrimination.

Consultation

To help shape the new Strategic Equality Plan, we undertook a 12-week consultation with the public and workforce from December 2019 to February 2020. An on-line survey was available to complete, emails were sent to staff and community groups that reflect the protected characteristics contained within the Equality Act 2010, with updates being posted on social media channels. We have also met with the Senior Management Team within the Council and Managers who will be delivering the actions within the action plan.

The purpose of the consultation was to ensure we meet our duties to review our equality objectives and to engage with protected characteristic groups in doing so.

We asked people to consider the following when answering the questions;

- *What challenges are people with protected characteristics facing within the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil?*
- *Do the objectives adequately address these challenges?*
- *What more could we do to improve?*

Some of the feedback we received from the consultation included;

- We should engage and involve people in the community more, ensuring that we reflect the demographic make up and proportions of the area. We should

also engage with people at the earliest time, before decisions are made, and consider the timing of focus groups to cater for those who work.

- We should lead by example and ensure we have an inclusive and diverse workforce so that it is reflected in the wider community. Also, to talk more openly about what it means to have inclusive, safe and cohesive communities.
- More staff awareness and training about protected characteristics and education to staff on various issues. Positive education about people with mental and physical disabilities.
- Ensure how we monitor information allows everyone to be represented. Information should be accessible to all.
- Promote opportunities for more flexible working. Give more people opportunities to apply for jobs within the Council by making them external as well as internal.
- Remove barriers and ensure equality of opportunity for all.
- Consider reviewing policies and procedures to address any issues or challenges identified.
- Ensure that services are accessible to all people with disabilities and consider providing gender neutral facilities. Also consider updating relevant monitoring forms to reflect other genders.
- There should be equity in pay between men and women in the Council. Ensuring that women and men get the same opportunity in the workplace, regardless of protected characteristics.

We used the information from the consultation to inform our objectives and actions within the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024.

Objectives

The themes and objectives that we have included within the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 are identified in the table below:

THEME	OBJECTIVE
Inclusive Engagement and Participation	Engage with our Citizens to participate and have their voices heard to understand and respond to the needs of our communities.
Community Cohesion	Promote and facilitate inclusive, safe and cohesive communities.
Inclusive and Diverse Workforce	Create an inclusive and diverse workforce, which reflects the communities in Merthyr Tydfil.
Gender/Equal Pay	Ensure equity of pay across Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.
Accessible Services	Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing our services.

A number of actions for each objective was identified and will be reviewed and monitored throughout the duration of the strategy.

Socio-economic Duty

The Socio-Economic Duty places a responsibility on the Council to actively consider ('pay due regard' to) how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions. The duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently and put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making. The overall aim of the duty is to deliver better outcomes for those who experience socio-economic disadvantage.

In broad terms, 'socio-economic disadvantage' means living on a low income compared to others in Wales, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services.

The duty was due to come in to force March 2020. However, the Welsh Government reprioritised its business to reflect the unprecedented nature of the Coronavirus (COVID 19) pandemic. Therefore, a revised date for the duty has been agreed. The duty will now come into force on the 31 March 2021. The duty will be a key mechanism in supporting the most vulnerable in our communities, and will be extremely important when we recover from the current crisis.

Research and preparation work is being undertaken in meeting the duty on a day-to-day basis and how this will be incorporated into our working practices to ensure we are meeting the duty.

CONTACT INFORMATION

We welcome comments on the report and if you want to know more about the work the Council is doing please use the contact details below:

Equalities

Civic Centre

Castle Street

Merthyr Tydfil

CF47 8AN

Tel: 01685 725000

equalities@merthyr.gov.uk

Number of Staff

Permanent	Fixed Term	Full Time	Part Time
1879	405	1292	992

Age

16-34	35-54	55-64	65+	TOTAL
576	1241	426	41	2284

Disability

Deaf/Hard of Hearing	Mental Health Difficulties	Mobility Impairment	Learning Impairment	Long-Standing Illness	Visual Impairment
11	7	6	2	37	4

Other	No Disability	Prefer not to Answer/Not Known	TOTAL
15	1952	250	2284

Gender

Male	Female	TOTAL
557	1727	2284

Sexual Orientation

Gay Woman/Lesbian	Gay Man	Bisexual	Heterosexual/Straight	Other	Prefer not to Answer/Not Known	TOTAL
13	12	3	1992	2	262	2284

Religion

Christianity	No Religion	Buddhism	Judaism	Islamic	Hinduism	Other	Prefer not to Answer/Not Known	TOTAL
656	986	4	1	4	0	131	502	2284

Ethnicity

White British	White Other	Asian	Black Caribbean	Black African	Mixed Race	Prefer not to Answer/Not Known	TOTAL
1993	15	8	1	1	1	265	2284

First Language

English	Welsh	Maltese	Polish	German	Portuguese	French
1602	34	0	6	2	2	1

Spanish	Filipino	Thai	Prefer not to Answer/Not Known	TOTAL
1	0	1	635	2284

People Profile - Salary

Salary	All Staff			
	Male		Female	
	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time
£0 - £4,999	0	8	0	212
£5,000 - £9,999	0	13	0	153
£10,000 - £14,999	9	43	42	430
£15,000 - £19,999	51	26	122	230
£20,000 - £24,999	130	4	130	63
£25,000 - £29,999	88	1	119	17
£30,000 - £39,999	99	5	174	56
£40,000 - £49,999	71	0	176	4
£50,000 - £59,999	10	0	26	1
£60,000 - £69,999	12	0	16	0
£70,000+	8	0	9	0
Calculated: Total number of salaries				
TOTAL	478	100	814	1166

NB- The figures include staff with multiple posts.

Job Applications (April 2019 to March 2020)

Total number of applications = 2004

In terms of the number of staff who applied for a job internally at the Council, we received 289 internal applications of which 90 were Male and 199 were Female.

In terms of external applicants the Council received 1,696 external applications of which 446 were Male and 1250 were Female.

In terms of Agency Applications the council received 19 applications, of which 3 were male and 16 were female.

	Number of employees involved in grievance procedure				
Protected Characteristics	As the complainant	A person against whom a complaint was made	Number of employees subject to disciplinary procedures	Number of employees who have left the Authority	Number of Staff taking Maternity Leave
	1	1	21	223	58
Age					
16-34			5	67	42
35-54	1	1	11	84	16
55-64			5	56	
65+			0	16	
Sex					
Male	1	1	5	68	
Female			16	155	58
Disability					
Disabled				8	2
Non-Disabled	1	1		169	49
Prefer not to Answer/Not Known			21	46	7
Sexual Orientation					
Heterosexual	1	1		166	49
Lesbian/Gay				4	
Bi-Sexual				1	
Other				2	1
Prefer not to Answer/Not Known			21	50	8

Ethnic Group					
English/Welsh	1	1		165	45
White Other	1	1		9	1
Asian					
Black African					
Prefer not to Answer/Not Known			21	49	12
Religion or Belief	2	1			
No Religion	0	0		91	25
Christianity (all Denominations)	0	0		47	15
Islamic	0	0			
Buddhism	0	0			1
Other	0	0		16	
Prefer not to Answer/Not Known	2	1	21	69	17

Gender/Equal Pay

The Council undertakes annual gender pay gap reporting and this is included in the Pay Policy Statement, which is published on 31st March.

All jobs are evaluated using the Greater London Provincial Council scheme of Job Evaluation (with the exception of Heads of Service who are processed via the HAY Scheme). No personal information regarding the post holder is taken into account 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.

There is no inequality in pay. All jobs are scored fairly and consistently in accordance with the Greater London Provincial Council scheme. Our policies and procedures are continually monitored and reviewed to ensure that there are no hidden or perceived

barriers. Historically, the Council together with Trade Unions undertook a lot of work with the implementation of single status and the new pay spine.