

**MERTHYR TYDFIL
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN

2020-2024



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

CONTENTS

WELCOME TO MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL’S STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2020-2024	3
ABOUT US.....	4
OUR VISION, VALUES AND OBJECTIVES	5
PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2020-2024.....	7
OUR EQUALITY OBJECTIVES FOR 2020-2024	12
THEME: INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION	13
OBJECTIVE: ENGAGE WITH OUR CITIZENS TO PARTICIPATE AND HAVE THEIR VOICES HEARD TO UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITIES.	13
THEME: COMMUNITY COHESION	14
OBJECTIVE: PROMOTE AND FACILITATE INCLUSIVE, SAFE AND COHESIVE COMMUNITIES.....	14
THEME: INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE WORKFORCE	15
OBJECTIVE: CREATE AN INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE WORKFORCE, WHICH REFLECTS THE COMMUNITIES IN MERTHYR TYDFIL.	15
THEME: GENDER / EQUAL PAY.....	17
OBJECTIVE: ENSURE EQUITY OF PAY ACROSS MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL.	17
THEME: ACCESSIBLE SERVICES	18
OBJECTIVE: UNDERSTAND AND REMOVE THE BARRIERS PEOPLE FACE WHEN ACCESSING OUR SERVICES.....	18
DEVELOPING THE OBJECTIVES	19
DELIVERING, MONITORING AND REVIEWING THE PLAN	20
FURTHER INFORMATION	20
SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS.....	21

WELCOME TO MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2020-2024

We are pleased to introduce our Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024. The purpose of this 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.

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."

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.

Building on the Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020, we will continue to promote equality and diversity and share ideas and good practice with partners and other service providers. We will continue to refine and develop our services, including respective monitoring systems, to help us gain a better understanding of our staff and the wider local communities and the diverse needs of our communities.

We will continue to work towards achieving our vision through our role as community leader, service provider, commissioner and employer, and we will work in partnership in any way we can to improve the well-being of the County Borough.

The activities in the Action Plan clearly show our strong commitment to eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote equal opportunities and good relations between people visiting, living and working in Merthyr Tydfil.

We are strongly committed to ensuring that the principles of equality and diversity are demonstrated in all aspects of how we deliver services and within our working practices.



Councillor Lisa Mytton

Leader of the Council and
Equalities Champion



Ellis Cooper

Chief Executive

ABOUT US

Merthyr Tydfil is situated in the Heads of the Valleys Region with an area of around 11,100 hectares. Approximately one fifth of the County Borough lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park to the north, leaving some 8,675 hectares of land under the planning control of the County Borough Council.

Merthyr Tydfil has a population of 60,183. The main town comprises of commercial, retail and a service centre of the County Borough with retail parks located in Cyfarthfa and Pentrebach. There is a hospital and other higher order services and facilities which serve surrounding settlements.

Merthyr Tydfil fulfils a key strategic role at the centre of the Heads of the Valleys region, benefiting from high levels of accessibility through its location at the intersection of the A470 (T) and A465 (T) strategic transport corridors in the north, and the A470 (T) and A472 strategic transport corridors in the south. The County Borough lies just 25 minutes north of Cardiff and the M4 corridor.

The Council operates a Leader and Cabinet executive. This consists of the Leader and five Cabinet members. The Council has eleven electoral divisions which are represented by thirty three Elected Councillors. The Council has a Corporate Management Team (CMT), consisting of the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Chief Officers, Monitoring Officer, Chief Finance Officer and Heads of Services within the Corporate Centre. The CMT oversee the strategic management of the Council's business.

The Local Authority is the biggest employer in the County Borough which currently has approximately 2,300 members of staff. They are employed into a variety of different roles within five service areas as listed below, plus School's based staff.

The five Council service areas are:

- Corporate Services
- Best Start to Life
- Working Life
- Environmental Wellbeing
- Living Well

There are two main Council buildings within the County Borough. One is within the main town centre (Civic Centre) and the other is situated in Pentrebach (Unit 5). Both are used as central locations for services within the County Borough.

The Council has a shared vision with Partners from across the County Borough and aligns to our regional objectives for Cwm Taf. Our vision and values are an integral part of how we work and deliver services.

OUR VISION, VALUES AND OBJECTIVES

Our shared vision for Merthyr Tydfil is;

“to strengthen Merthyr Tydfil’s position as the regional centre for the Heads of the Valleys, and be a place to be proud of where;

- People learn and develop skills to fulfil their ambitions
- People live, work, have a safe, healthy and fulfilled life,
- People visit, enjoy and return”

The Council has adopted a set of core values and associated behaviours, which are;

- Honesty & Openness
- Trust & Respect
- Accountability
- Learning
- Aspiration
- Team Working
- Communication

How will we work together to deliver our shared vision and achieve our goals?

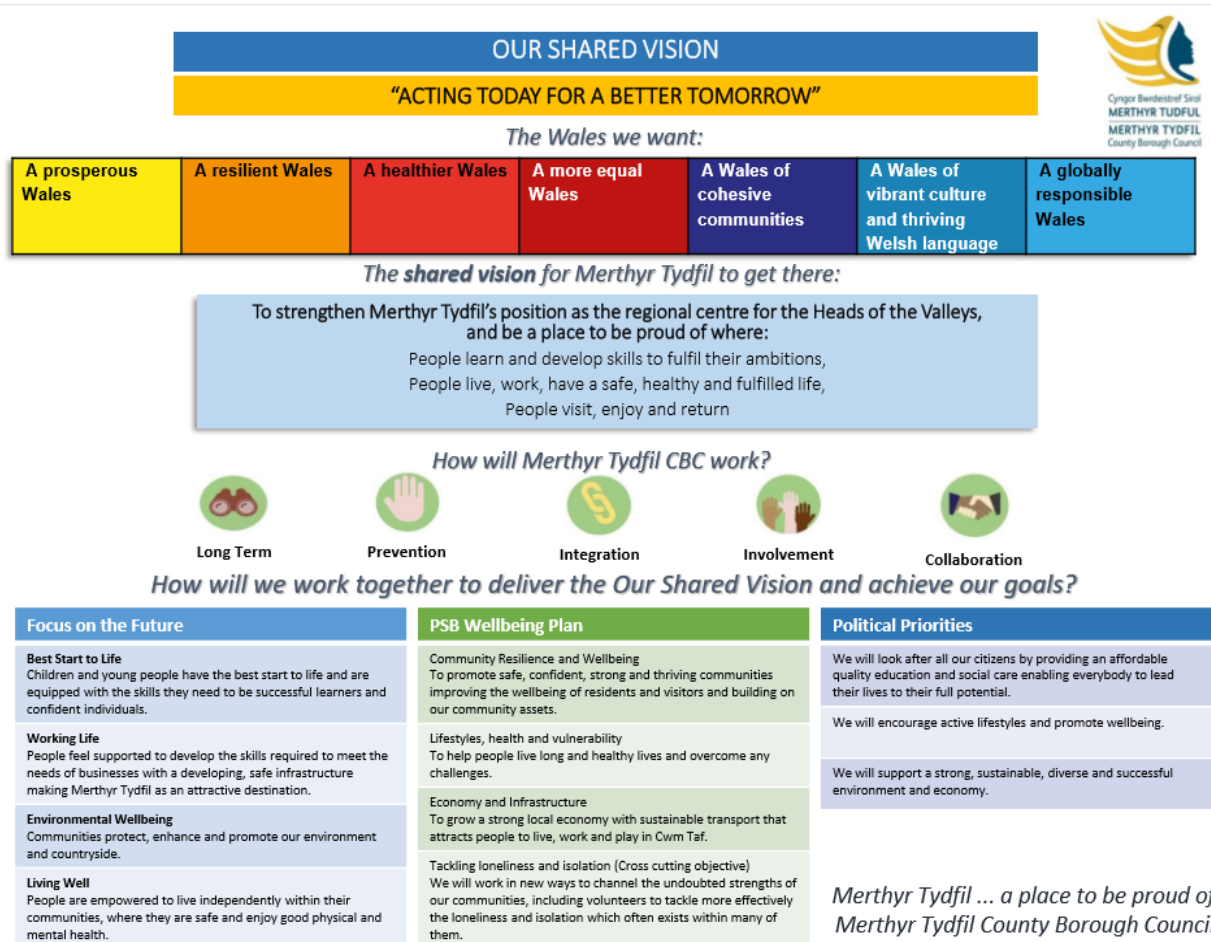
The Council has developed four objectives that form the focus of the Council’s Corporate Plan. These are outlined in the table below:

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE – Our Corporate Plan	
BEST START TO LIFE	Children and young people have the best start to life and are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals.
WORKING LIFE	People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses with a developing, safe infrastructure making Merthyr Tydfil as an attractive destination.
ENVIRONMENTAL WELLBEING	Communities protect, enhance and promote our environment and countryside.
LIVING WELL	People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health.

The Strategic Equality Plan links to a number of other key strategies, plans, policies, frameworks and legislation, within the Council and Wales-wide. Some examples (but not exhaustive) are;

- Focus on the Future 2017-2022
- Building a Healthy Organisation Plan 2020-2023
- The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014
- The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.
- Welsh Language Standards (introduced under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011)
- More Than Words: Welsh Government Welsh Language Strategy
- Cymraeg 2050 (1 million Welsh speakers by 2050)

The diagram below gives a summary of the Council's Shared Vision in the context of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 together with regional objectives and local political priorities.



PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2020-2024

The Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 has been developed to reflect our commitment to equality in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil and to ensure we are meeting our statutory obligations as found within the Equality Act 2010. This 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.

EQUALITY ACT 2010, PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY (PSED) AND PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of their protected characteristic. There are nine protected characteristics listed under the 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. The Act includes a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) replacing the separate duties on race, disability and gender equality.

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

In advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't we must also ensure that we:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and are connected to that characteristic.
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation is disproportionately low.
- Meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.

The Specific Duties

In Wales we have specific statutory duties placed upon us which set out what actions the Council must take to comply. 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. These were published by Welsh Government in April 2011 and cover the following:

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

What the duty requires on Equality Objectives

A listed body in Wales must:

- 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.

Objectives on pay difference

A listed body in Wales must:

- Have due regard to the need to have objectives to address the causes of any pay differences that seem reasonably likely to be related to any of the protected characteristics.
- Publish an equality objective to address any gender pay gap identified or else publish reasons why it has not done so.

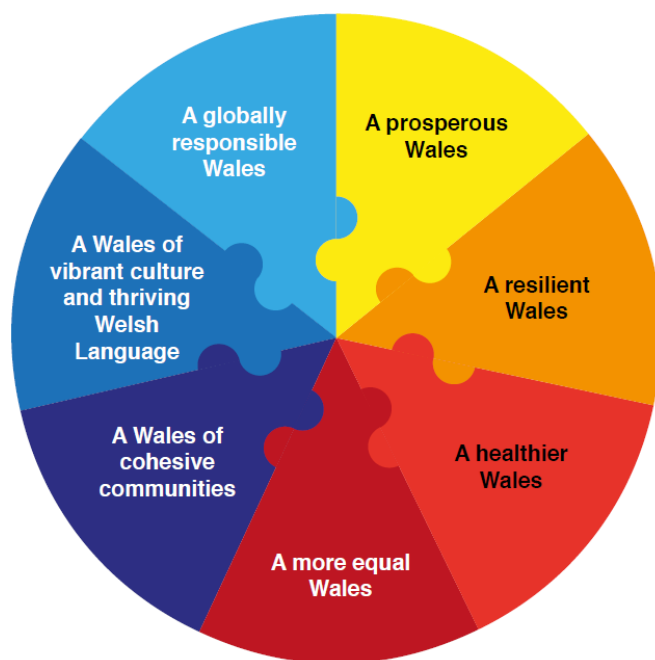
WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

We are committed to ensure the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is embedded into working practices and service delivery.

We must maximise our contribution to the seven national Well-being goals. In all of our work, we need to incorporate these goals into all of our work ensuring that they are considered when decisions are being made.

We must 'act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

The Act also asks us to apply the five ways of working in our work;



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.

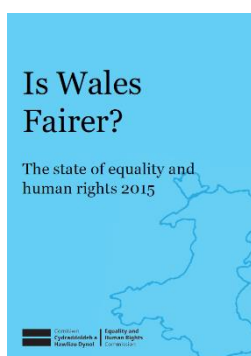
These principles have been used to guide the development of our Equality Objectives and the actions we will take to deliver each objective.

The assessment of the five ways of working is included within the Council's Integrated Impact Assessment, which also includes assessment of the Well-Being objectives, protected characteristics and biodiversity. All decisions made by the Council are assessed against the nine protected characteristics.

External reports undertaken by the Equality and Human Rights Commission have supported and influenced the development of our equality objectives.

IS WALES FAIRER? 2015 – EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

This report identified a number of key equality and human rights challenges for Wales. It looked at 7 key challenges;



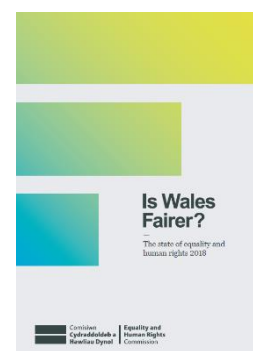
- Close attainment gaps in education.
- Encourage fair recruitment, development and reward in employment.
- Improve living conditions in cohesive communities.
- Increase access to justice and encourage democratic participation.
- Improve access to mental health services and support people experiencing poor mental health.
- Prevent abuse, neglect and ill-treatment in care and detention.
- Eliminate violence, abuse and harassment in the community.

According to the report, the challenges will require substantial efforts of public, private and third sector organisations and of individuals to reduce them.

IS WALES FAIRER? 2018 – EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

This report provides a complete picture of people's life chances in Wales. It looks across all areas of life, including,

- Education
- Work
- Living standards
- Health
- Justice and security
- Participation in society



It identifies a wide range of recommendations to address the key equality and human rights challenges in Wales. It identifies that some progress has been made but there is more work to be done.

The key focus of the Equality and Human Rights Commission will be socio-economic disadvantage, disability, gender and race.

The objectives have been developed to align with the findings from both *Is Wales Fairer? 2015* and *Is Wales Fairer? 2018*.

WELSH LANGUAGE (WALES) MEASURE 2011

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 replaced the Welsh Language Act 1993 and placed an obligation on public sector bodies to comply with Welsh Language Standards. Essentially, the Measure has the same requirement as the Welsh Language Act.

We must treat the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality in the provision of services to the public in Wales.



Public bodies must comply with a set of national Welsh Language Standards. These were issued to the Council by the Welsh Language Commissioner via a compliance notice. There are 176 standards and the compliance notice sets out which standards apply to the Council, along with any exemptions and expected implementation dates.

The standards are split into four themes:

- Service Delivery
- Operational
- Record Keeping
- Policy Making

Welsh Language is not covered by the Equality Act 2010 but Equality and Welsh Language policy agendas complement and inform each other. Welsh Language is also included within the goals in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language.

Welsh Language is a key element of the Council's Equality agenda. The Council promotes and facilitate the use of the Welsh Language by observing the following guiding principles:

- Individuals have the right to deal with us in Welsh
- Welsh must be positioned to be read first (to the left or above the English)
- Language rights for staff
- The quality of service and a positive attitude are important
- We must offer Welsh Language services to give language choice.

OUR EQUALITY OBJECTIVES FOR 2020-2024

In developing our equality objectives we have engaged with our communities and workforce. We have also used relevant information to inform our objectives including looking forward to consider potential future changes that we need to consider in assessing impact.

Welsh Government are currently consulting on commencing the socio-economic duty in Wales. Our approach to discharging this duty will be informed by developments at a national level. We will ensure that this is included within our working practices in reducing inequalities of outcome that result from socio-economic disadvantage.

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.

The themes and objectives that we have included in this plan 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

The theme 'Accessible Services' was included following the consultation as accessibility was raised in the consultation responses. We have listened to our workforce and the community and included this additional objective. We have also ensured that we integrate and include actions relating to the Welsh Language.

THEME: INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION**OBJECTIVE: ENGAGE WITH OUR CITIZENS TO PARTICIPATE AND HAVE THEIR VOICES HEARD TO UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF OUR 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. A clear understanding of who lives within the local area is essential in providing services to the public.

Involving residents in decision-making creates strong communities. Some protected groups face significant barriers on a daily basis which can affect their participation in community life and when accessing services. By understanding these barriers, we are able to provide better services to our citizens. Engagement is not only a key means of improving services, but also a statutory responsibility in relation to Equality, as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

Ensuring that information is available in a variety of formats is vital in ensuring that all citizens are able to participate in engagement exercises. Even though more access is available digitally, there continues to be barriers that prevent citizens from engaging. Meaningful discussions are important to help us identify what matters most to people, which can enable us to be better informed when making decisions.

We want to do more to engage and support groups which are not represented. Consulting with key stakeholders in a variety of different formats and methods, and ensuring that engagement starts with sufficient time to involve more people to improve communication and ensure everyone has a voice. We want to improve the collection of data and our equality monitoring questions when consulting with our communities, providing information in easily readable formats using plain language.

We want to work towards attainment of Inspire Gold standard. The successful attainment of Inspire Gold standard will ensure the Council, and its key partners, place service users at the centre of the development of sport and physical activity opportunities for disabled people in Merthyr Tydfil, with actions being a direct response of engagement and consultation. The Inspire Gold Standard will evidence how service users have been engaged and how the Council and its partners have taken a collaborative approach to meet this need.

We asked staff to complete a culture survey in 2019. The feedback has been analysed and is in the process of being developed into an Action Plan which will fit within the 'Building a Healthy Organisation' plan 2020-2023. We want to identify any areas for improvement that have been raised by our staff relating to protected characteristics.

Relevant Protected Characteristics (including Welsh Language)	Themes in Is Wales Fairer? 2018	Link to Well-Being Goals
Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage	Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice	A healthier Wales, A more equal Wales, A Wales of

and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language.	and Personal, Security, Participation.	cohesive communities, A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
Actions		
Regularly review and update the list of key stakeholder groups within the County Borough to ensure representation from protected characteristic groups.		
Review and re-establish citizens panel and staff forum.		
Implement a Communication and Consultation Strategy and embed this into all consultation exercises undertaken in the Council.		
Strengthen internal processes to improve the detail contained within Integrated Impact Assessments and timeliness of completion.		
Continue to provide advice and guidance, ensuring correct signposting.		
As part of our 'Building a Healthy Organisation plan', frequently engage with staff and analyse the responses from the culture survey to determine issues and areas for improvement in relation to the protected characteristics.		
Promote the availability of bilingual services by ensuring Welsh speakers and learners within service areas wear appropriate lanyards/badges.		
Work towards the achievement of Disability Sport Wales insport Gold Standard.		

THEME: COMMUNITY COHESION

OBJECTIVE: PROMOTE AND FACILITATE INCLUSIVE, SAFE AND COHESIVE COMMUNITIES.

Merthyr Tydfil has a proud and rich history of being a diverse and welcoming community. However, with this comes a possible increase of hate crime and extremism. Hate crimes and incidents have a damaging and corrosive impact upon community cohesion, which can in turn, increase community tensions and create a sense of intolerance.

Community cohesion is strongly connected to work on equalities. A more equal society creates the foundation stone that enables different groups to interact on an equal footing.

We recognise that under reporting of hate crime still needs to be addressed. We need to raise awareness of what a hate crime is and ensure the public know how and where to report hate crime. A more equal society creates the foundation stone that enables different groups to interact on an equal footing.

Community cohesion is essential in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on together and enables a sense of belonging. This enables people to feel safer and more secure in their communities. A community where people have increased contact and are able to forge greater relationships with others increases understanding of different cultures.

We want to ensure the public and the workforce know how and where to report hate crime and that victims of hate crime understand and are supported to access the support available to them.

We want to provide training to those within the workforce who work closely with the public to be able to recognise hate crimes and be able to confidently report it.

We want to continue to work with our communities, celebrate diversity and bring people together to promote positive community cohesion. We also want to continue to network with other stakeholders, collaborate and strengthen links.

Relevant Protected Characteristics (including Welsh Language)	Themes in Is Wales Fairer? 2018	Link to Well-Being Goals
Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation.	Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation.	A more equal Wales, A Wales of cohesive communities, A healthier Wales
Actions		
Raise awareness of hate crime and increase reporting in the County Borough.		
Undertake community-mapping exercises.		
Hold community events, promote positive community cohesion and celebrate diversity.		
Ensure victims of hate crime have awareness of the support services available to them.		
Continue to work collaboratively wherever possible and strengthen links through networking.		
Implement an Equality Champion project within Schools, youth forums and with volunteers.		
Ensure training is undertaken on protected characteristic groups for staff and councillors.		

THEME: INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE WORKFORCE

OBJECTIVE: CREATE AN INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE WORKFORCE, WHICH REFLECTS THE COMMUNITIES IN MERTHYR TYDFIL.

Nationally there is a need to ensure understanding of requirements to collect and use employment information on all protected characteristics. Also nationally, IT systems or alternative solutions need to support the collection, recording and use of required employment information.

We want employees to feel safe in the environment they work and to be themselves. The mantra of Stonewall Cymru is that *'people perform better when they can be themselves'*. We want to get the best out of our employees. We want a workforce that feels safe and confident to provide information about themselves and a culture that is safe and inclusive. We need to know more about the diversity of our workforce. We need to

undertake more workplace equality monitoring to know what we need to do to improve services, involving people in the heart of it.

We are a Disability Confident employer. However, we want to do more to raise awareness about what support is available to those with protected characteristics, at recruitment but also throughout the workplace journey.

We want to raise awareness of the Welsh Language and Welsh Language Standards, providing training and targeting new job opportunities to Welsh Speakers.

As a part of our 'Building a Healthy Organisation Plan 2020-2023; we want to ensure any issues raised relating to protected characteristics are identified and actions are developed.

Relevant Protected Characteristics (including Welsh Language)	Themes in Is Wales Fairer? 2018	Link to Well-Being Goals
Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language.	Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation.	A healthier Wales, A more equal Wales, A Wales of cohesive communities, A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.
Actions		
Support and facilitate Equalities training and learning opportunities so that Equalities is recognised and incorporated into roles.		
Work collaboratively to support Pride events through the brand 'Proud Councils'.		
Improve the monitoring and collection of data for the workforce and reinforce the importance of recording customer/employee equality data.		
Monitor and report the number of staff who have completed the Equalities Monitoring Form through HR21.		
Undertake a data cleansing exercise in relation to the settlement status of our employees.		
As part of our 'Building a Healthy Organisation plan' and analysis of the culture survey responses, develop specific actions that relate to protected characteristics.		
Develop and implement eLearning on harassment in the workplace to all staff.		
Raise awareness amongst staff that come into contact with children and young people of the need to foster positive attitudes towards the Welsh language.		
Ensure Welsh Language training is available to staff.		
Target new job opportunities at Welsh Speakers.		
Review how we collect our workforce data.		

THEME: GENDER / EQUAL PAY**OBJECTIVE: ENSURE EQUITY OF PAY ACROSS MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL.**

As a Council we are required to consider any pay differences that exist across the Council and to identify an objective that will address any difference identified. Nationally whilst pay systems are important in determining pay equity, there are a number of 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.

The Council publishes an Annual Pay Policy Statement. 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 gender during the reporting.

Reporting on this helps us to understand the size and causes of any gender pay gaps and any issues that need to be addressed.

We want to ensure our data accurately reflects our workforce and continue to meet our statutory duties of reporting on our equality monitoring information.

We also want to raise more awareness of the flexible working policy and any other policies which can assist in promoting different working to suit the different needs of our workforce.

Relevant Protected Characteristics (including Welsh Language)	Themes in Is Wales Fairer? 2018	Link to Well-Being Goals
Age, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Sex.	Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation.	A prosperous Wales, A more equal Wales, A healthier Wales.

Actions

Ensure workplace data is up to date and regularly review this data to determine actions to meet any duties placed upon us.

Where necessary, make changes to policies and practices that are found to be a contributory factor to any identified inequality in pay.

Continue to publish Annual Pay Policy Statement in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Review HR policies and raise awareness of opportunities such as flexible working, part time work, job sharing etc.

THEME: ACCESSIBLE SERVICES**OBJECTIVE: UNDERSTAND AND REMOVE THE BARRIERS PEOPLE FACE WHEN ACCESSING OUR SERVICES.**

Barriers experienced by groups and individuals may include physical access to buildings, access to information in appropriate formats to suit their needs, transport, unemployment, mental health difficulties, access to technology etc.

We want to:

- Find out more about how people access our services to ensure that the services we offer and how we offer our services reflect the diversity of our community.
- Raise awareness and improve our understanding of the issues people face when accessing our services to remove barriers. Effective engagement and monitoring of information will assist in informing us of the accessibility of services to our customers.
- Empower groups with protected characteristics to be able to access the services offered by the Council. More services are being accessed digitally which allows citizens to be more engaged and allows us to reach more people. We need to consider mechanisms for reaching all members of the community. Ensuring that there is clear signage, lighting, readable formats for service users ensuring that physical access and digital access is appropriate.

Relevant Protected Characteristics (including Welsh Language)	Themes in Is Wales Fairer? 2018	Link to Well-Being Goals
Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language.	Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation.	A healthier Wales, A more equal Wales, A Wales of cohesive communities, A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

Actions

Continue to make more services available digitally and promote the use of technology when accessing our services.

Ensure the Council's website is fully bilingual and pages are monitored and updated in both languages on a rolling programme basis.

Ensure the Council's website is up to date and contains relevant information in a readable format.

Give people the opportunity to have documents in readable formats; 'in plain language'.

Ensure the Council's website and intranet is accessible so that people with disabilities can engage.

Ensure training is provided to staff who deal with customers on providing accessible services to people with disabilities.

DEVELOPING THE OBJECTIVES

We undertook a 12-week consultation with the public and workforce. 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?*

WHAT FEEDBACK DID WE RECEIVE FROM THE CONSULTATION?

- 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 have used this information to inform our objectives and actions within the plan.

DELIVERING, MONITORING AND REVIEWING THE PLAN

The equality objectives will be monitored and delivered through the action plan. The Council will publish an Annual Equality Report providing information on;

- Delivery of the Strategic Equality Plan
- Progress on the objectives and actions
- Employment monitoring information

The plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that actions are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Bound), and fit for purpose and that new legislation/guidance is factored into the plan. This will ensure that we are continuously improving.

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

FURTHER INFORMATION

Equalities
Civic Centre
Castle Street
Merthyr Tydfil
CF47 8AN
Tel: 01685 725000
equalities@merthyr.gov.uk

The plan is available in other formats upon request. To make a request please use the contact details above.

SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

THEME: INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

OBJECTIVE: ENGAGE WITH OUR CITIZENS TO PARTICIPATE AND HAVE THEIR VOICES HEARD TO UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITIES.

ACTIONS	Regularly review and update the list of key stakeholder groups within the County Borough to ensure representation from protected characteristic groups.
	Review and re-establish citizens panel and staff forum.
	Implement a Communication and Consultation Strategy and embed this into all consultation exercises undertaken in the Council.
	Strengthen internal processes to improve the detail contained within Integrated Impact Assessments and timeliness of completion.
	Continue to provide advice and guidance, ensuring correct signposting.
	As part of our 'Building a Healthy Organisation plan', frequently engage with staff and analyse the responses from the culture survey to determine issues and areas for improvement in relation to the protected characteristics.
	Promote the availability of bilingual services by ensuring Welsh speakers and learners within service areas wear appropriate lanyards/badges.
	Work towards the achievement of Disability Sport Wales insport Gold Standard.

THEME: COMMUNITY COHESION

OBJECTIVE: PROMOTE AND FACILITATE INCLUSIVE, SAFE AND COHESIVE COMMUNITIES.

ACTIONS	Raise awareness of hate crime and increase reporting in the County Borough.
	Undertake community-mapping exercises.
	Hold community events, promote positive community cohesion and celebrate diversity.
	Ensure victims of hate crime have awareness of the support services available to them.
	Continue to work collaboratively wherever possible and strengthen links through networking.
	Implement an Equality Champion project within Schools, youth forums and with volunteers.
	Ensure training is undertaken on protected characteristic groups for staff and councillors.

THEME: INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE WORKFORCE	
OBJECTIVE: CREATE AN INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE WORKFORCE, WHICH REFLECTS THE COMMUNITIES IN MERTHYR TYDFIL.	
ACTIONS	Support and facilitate Equalities training and learning opportunities so that Equalities is recognised and incorporated into roles.
	Work collaboratively to support Pride events through the brand 'Proud Councils'.
	Improve the monitoring and collection of data for the workforce and reinforce the importance of recording customer/employee equality data.
	Monitor and report the number of staff who have completed the Equalities Monitoring Form through HR21.
	Undertake a data cleansing exercise in relation to the settlement status of our employees.
	As part of our 'Building a Healthy Organisation plan' and analysis of the culture survey responses, develop specific actions that relate to protected characteristics.
	Develop and implement eLearning on harassment in the workplace to all staff.
	Raise awareness amongst staff that come into contact with children and young people of the need to foster positive attitudes towards the Welsh language.
	Ensure Welsh Language training is available to staff.
	Target new job opportunities at Welsh Speakers.
	Review how we collect our workforce data.

THEME: GENDER / EQUAL PAY	
OBJECTIVE: ENSURE EQUITY OF PAY ACROSS MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL.	
ACTIONS	Ensure workplace data is up to date and regularly review this data to determine actions to meet any duties placed upon us.
	Where necessary, make changes to policies and practices that are found to be a contributory factor to any identified inequality in pay.
	Continue to publish Annual Pay Policy Statement in line with the Equality Act 2010.
	Review HR policies and raise awareness of opportunities such as flexible working, part time work, job sharing etc.

THEME: ACCESSIBLE SERVICES**OBJECTIVE: UNDERSTAND AND REMOVE THE BARRIERS PEOPLE FACE WHEN ACCESSING OUR SERVICES.**

ACTIONS	Continue to make more services available digitally and promote the use of technology when accessing our services.
	Ensure the Council's website is fully bilingual and pages are monitored and updated in both languages on a rolling programme basis.
	Ensure the Council's website is up to date and contains relevant information in a readable format.
	Give people the opportunity to have documents in readable formats; 'in plain language'.
	Ensure the Council's website and intranet is accessible so that people with disabilities can engage.
	Ensure training is provided to staff who deal with customers on providing accessible services to people with disabilities.