



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – MR CRAIG GRIFFITHS

13th January 2025

Matter for Information

Wards Affected: All Wards

Overview of learning and development in respect of Equality Act 2010

Purpose of the Report:

This report outlines the current support and training opportunities available to elected members in Wales to enhance their understanding and application of the Equality Act 2010. Ensuring elected members are equipped with knowledge of their legal duties and responsibilities under the Act is essential for fostering equality, diversity, and inclusion in public service.

Background:

The Equality Act 2010 places specific duties on public authorities, including councils and elected members, to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between different groups in the community.

Learning and development opportunities supports members by:

- Promoting compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).
- Ensuring informed decision-making that considers equality impacts.
- Reducing the risk of legal challenges and reputational damage.
- Supporting the development of inclusive policies and practices.

Current opportunities include:

- **Local Authority Training**
 - Many Welsh councils include Equality Act training as part of their induction and ongoing member development programs. This training typically covers:
 - The provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
 - Practical application of equality impact assessments in decision-making.
 - Case studies of equality-related issues, such as accessible services and tackling discrimination.
 - This Council facilitated training for members in the following ways:
 - Advice on equality obligations including in Code of Conduct training and need to ensure equality
 - Specific training on the Public Sector Equality Duty and how consideration to equality matters should be embedded in decision. The Council has an Integrated Impact Assessment which accompanies decision making to highlight consideration of these factors.
 - Ongoing support to elected members from equality officers.
- **Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)**
 - The WLGA provides tailored training and guidance to elected members, on complying with the Equality Act 2010 and the need to ensure protected characteristics are considered. The programme includes general equalities awareness, as well as more specific training on topics such as unconscious bias; awareness training in relation to specific protected characteristics; health and wellbeing as well as Welsh language awareness and Integrated Impact Assessment training.
 - Workshops on implementing the Equality Act in council policies and practices.
 - E-learning modules addressing key topics, such as, Introduction to the Equality Act 2010, understanding unconscious bias and Inclusive community engagement.
- **Online and External Training Resources**
 - Members are forwarded information from a range of resources to address equality issues, specifically, Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) offers resources, webinars, and practical guidance on compliance with the Equality Act and PSED. Academi Wales also provides leadership programs emphasising equality, diversity, and inclusion in decision-making and governance.
- **Strategic Equality Plan**
 - Councils in Wales have a legal duty to develop equality objectives and produce a Strategic Equality Plan. Our plan (approved and owned by the

Full Council) has been produced to meet this requirement and to reflect and delivery on the determination to promote genuine equality of opportunity, tackle discrimination and create a fairer more equitable Neath Port Talbot

- **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)**
 - The PSOW provides regular updates, case studies, and guidance on handling complaints involving breaches of the Equality Act or associated standards, helping members understand their responsibilities. Attached at Appendix 1 is an extract from the guidance from the PSOW Handbook for Elected Members

To help members achieve compliance a number of sources of support are available.

- **Monitoring Officers and Legal Team.** Monitoring Officers and council legal teams provide advice on the application of equality duties in decision-making and governance. Support in understanding equality impact assessments and their importance in policy development.
- **Equality Officers or Teams. The Council has dedicated** Equality Officers who offer guidance on how to integrate equality considerations into members' roles and training and workshops tailored to local equality priorities.
- **Peer Mentoring and Networks.** Both this Council and the WLGA facilitate mentoring schemes or member networks to share best practices in promoting equality and discuss challenges and practical solutions to embedding inclusion. This Council helps facilitate a personal development and training review for elected members and affords training to elected members to help them conduct this review with their fellow Councillors.

Comprehensive and accessible Equality Act training is essential for equipping elected members with the knowledge and skills to comply with their legal duties and promote equality in their work. Learning and development is an important element of our work, not only in helping us meet our equality objectives but also as a key feature in the personal development of employees and Elected Members.

Financial Impacts:

No implications.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No implications

Workforce Impacts:

No implications

Legal Impacts:

The Equality Act 2010 brought together and replaced previous anti-discrimination legislation, simplified and strengthened the law, removed inconsistencies and made it easier to understand for everyone. By implementing the Act our aim is to work towards creating a fairer society, improving public services, addressing entrenched inequalities and ultimately improving people's lives. The council, along with other public bodies, is required under the Act to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations amongst and between people of different protected groups (known as the Public Sector Equality Duty).

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item

Recommendations:

That members of the Standards Committee note the current learning and developing opportunities that afforded in respect of the Equality Act 2010.

Appendices:

Appendix 1- Extract of guidance from PSOW

List of Background Papers:

None

Officer Contact:

Mr Craig Griffiths
Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Telephone 01639 763767
Email: c.griffiths2@npt.gov.uk