

# **STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN**

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**2014 – 2015**

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## **Introduction**

This report for 2014-15 is the last annual report on our first Strategic Equality Plan that was published in 2012 and provides an assessment of progress against our original equality objectives during the year.

We have continued to work to remove or minimise disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics and to take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where they were different from the needs of other people. While we have made progress against some of the equality objectives we acknowledge the amount of work that remains.

The ongoing challenging financial circumstances, a reduced workforce and consequent need to prioritise resources have led to an earlier review of our equality objectives than was originally anticipated. This review, taking into account people's needs and requirements, our and our partners' resources as well as any external pressures placed upon local government, has been the main focus of our work during the year.

As austerity measures continue we must be mindful not to waste our resources but to concentrate on a few key areas that will have the greatest impact. Through working with our local equality groups, elected members, staff and our partners we are confident that our equality objectives will meet this challenge

## **Progress Made Against Our Equality Objectives**

**Objective 1 (a)** – Address harassment discrimination and other threats to personal safety experienced by people due to their protected characteristics – Hate Crime

### **What did we do?**

- Safer Neath Port Talbot led on a bus poster campaign in the area which promoted information on how and where to report hate crime.

- Our Community Safety Engagement Team carried out over 60 engagement events reaching over 10,000 residents during the year. These events were aimed at raising awareness of Hate Crime and how to report it.
- The Deputy Leader officially launched the Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council Voices Have Spoken (VHS) project in Port Talbot in November 2014
- Neath Port Talbot Communities First team financially supported the Swansea University 'Faith Awareness Week' in February 2015.
- In partnership with Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council a Disability Hate Crime Myth Busting leaflet was produced and launched by the Deputy Leader of Neath Port Talbot. The leaflet has been shared Wales wide.
- A Gypsy and Traveller Myth Busting leaflet was developed by the Western Bay Gypsy and Traveller Multi-Agency Forum. It is being used as a training resource in challenging stereotypical attitudes and prejudices against that community.

**Objective 1(b)** – Address harassment discrimination and other threats to personal safety experienced by people due to their protected characteristics – Domestic Abuse.

### **What did we do?**

- The Community Safety Team and various partners organised the annual Crucial Crew event in June. 1,600 year 6 pupils from all of NPT's primary schools attended, participating in a range of activities including a domestic abuse awareness session.
- We received a White Ribbon Town Award in October 2014, in recognition of our commitment to raising awareness, understanding and providing services in order to reduce the incidence of domestic violence and providing the community with increased support and understanding of this issue. Building on this success,

council staff worked with partners in other organisations to deliver a very successful White ribbon initiative in November 2014.

- The Hafan Cymru Spectrum Project received further funding from the Welsh Government to deliver healthy relationship lessons in primary schools in Neath Port Talbot in addition to the lessons they already deliver in the secondary sector.
- Calan Domestic Violence Service was awarded £2 million by the Big Lottery Fund to provide effective intervention measures for children and young people exposed to domestic violence and abuse.
- In addition, Port Talbot and Afan Women's Aid Healthy Relationships project also funded by the Big Lottery is now operating within the county borough.
- The youth offending service recognised the need for early intervention with children and young people who have witnessed domestic violence, committed a violent offence or committed a domestic violence related offence. As a consequence the service now offers a range of interventions aimed at reducing the risk of these children and young people becoming perpetrators in the future.

**Objective 2(a)** – Improve access to information by meeting the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people – website.

### **What did we do?**

- We have brought six new transactional services on-line in the last twelve months thereby improving the accessibility of our corporate website.
- We have continued to improve the content and appearance of our website. By analysing website hits we found that the majority of views were to only 250 of the 3000 pages. As a result we are working to smarten these pages, remove the obsolete pages and ensure that the Welsh translation of pages is up to date.

- On-line map based reporting, to enable the reporting of streetcare issues, e.g. problems with litter bins and dog waste bins, on-line underwent user testing and went live in January 2015
- We began to develop a Channel Shift Strategy which will ensure that both we and our citizens access the benefits of digital technologies, whilst also ensuring that use of other, more traditional channels are appropriate, efficient and effective. This Strategy will underline the importance of having a local and coherent response to digital inclusion to increase competitiveness within the local economy whilst also reducing inequality amongst our local population

**Objective 2(b)** – Improve access to information by meeting the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people – paper based public documentation.

### **What did we do?**

- We continued to utilise our ‘How to ...’ guides which are available on a variety of topics, including accessible information. These guides are available to all staff.
- Working with the Older Persons’ Council and the Youth Council we developed a more accessible summary of the Corporate Improvement Plan 2015-2018
- As part of our work to improve our website we are working to ensure that the all documentation is up to date and accessible in the printed form too.

**Objective 3** – Improve access to services by meeting the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people - social services.

### **What did we do?**

- During the year we supported 810 more individuals (65yrs+) in their own communities to become more independent in their day-to-day lives than last year (total was 3070).
- We successfully exited from the COASTAL project and all project outcomes have been achieved and sustainable future for employment and training projects are continuing. As the project ended in December 2014, the outcomes relate to nine months. 30 people gained paid employment and 151 achieved accredited training and 80 gained work experience.
- We have also established care and support service at Trem y Mor and extended the service at 'Old' Rhodes House.
- We opened the first of our four new residential care homes for older and disabled people, Llys y Seren with our partner Grŵp Gwalia.
- A new Assisted Transport Policy has been developed to encourage greater independence for older people and people with disabilities ensuring access to social services transport is only available to those who have an assessed need for it.
- From October, we fully implemented our modernised disability service, which is helping people become more independent, assisting people into employment or delivering modern care and support where this is needed. The number of individuals with a learning disability who are reliant on residential care reduced.
- We have also made a number of improvements to modernise social work practice to ensure we are fully focused on helping people maximise their independence and quality of life.

**Objective 4** – Monitor information and data effectively in order to identify disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics.

**What did we do?**

- Our work with the equality impact assessment process has highlighted areas where services need to focus attention to address the gaps in knowledge about their service users. Actions to address the gaps in knowledge are included in the action plans for each equality impact assessment
- We are aware that monitoring information is an essential tool in the development and provision of services. However, while there are systems in place to collect information we have yet to fully realise the potential of analysis and application of the data collected.
- Unfortunately, the revised monitoring form used in the recruitment process still has not been introduced due to the delays experienced with the database development of the Human Resources Vision Database.

**Objective 5** – Deliver staff training in line with the Equality Act requirements.

**What did we do?**

- We continued our commitment to improving staff and elected members awareness and understanding of hate crime, including that of disability hate crime, by holding a number of training sessions during the year.
- 26 Youth Service staff received Hate crime awareness ‘Train the Trainer’ sessions. These staff have in turn delivered awareness training to a further 57 staff and 125 young people.
- We held 2 disability hate crime awareness sessions in October and a further 2 in January with a total of 40 staff attending.



- In association with the Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator we arranged number of training sessions on topics including human trafficking, transgender awareness and 'Working with Roma Families in a Safeguarding Context'.
- During autumn 2014 we held equality impact assessment training sessions for staff while training sessions for elected members focused on their role in scrutinising equality impacts.
- Elected members attended a workshop which aimed to identify barriers the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities face when accessing local services, as well as explore opportunities to improve the provision of services and make them more inclusive of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers

**Objective 6 (a)** – Improve access to Environment by meeting the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people – civic offices and council owned buildings.

#### **What did we do?**

- We allocated £108k to improve access to buildings across the county borough.
- As a result of the feasibility study works began to create a disabled toilet on the second floor of Port Talbot Civic Centre. This is due for completion in August 2015
- We provided disabled crossings at Cwmclais Road, Cwmavon and Longford Road, Neath Abbey as well as continuing with our programme of installing dropped kerbs where appropriate in various locations across the county borough
- Works were carried out at Glanafan Comprehensive School to improve access for pupils and staff within the school environment
- We improved accessibility to public conveniences in Crynant with the installation of a unisex disabled toilet.

- At Pontardawe Library we improved access with the installation of an automatic door at the main entrance. We also improved facilities at the library by installing a new disabled toilet

**Objective 6 (b)** – Improve access to Environment by meeting the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people; street furniture, etc.

### **What did we do?**

- We began construction work to deliver the first phase of the Neath Town Centre redevelopment to improve the town centre for the community and visitors to the town.
- The first phase to include a new 600 space multi-storey car park, and 23,000 square feet of new retail space, including a space for Shopmobility, is under construction and due for completion in September 2015.
- The redevelopment of Port Talbot Parkway Stations was due for completion in spring 2015 but has been delayed due to a number of unforeseen site issues and has resulted in the need to undertake further design work. However the stations remains on track to be fully accessible
- Engagement with various equalities groups continues in respect of the Vibrant and Viable Places programme which will fund projects in Port Talbot

**Objective 7 (a)** – Reduce gaps in the educational performance experienced by pupils due to their protected characteristics; pupil attendance.

### **What did we do?**

- In the 2013-14 academic year, we made improvements in pupil attendance. Primary school attendance increased by 1.6% to 94.6% and secondary school attendance increased by 0.9% to 93.5%.

- The ongoing core visits to schools which include looking at attendance issues and all schools requiring to submit attendance targets with an action plan and evaluation has positively impacted on attendance levels. In a comparison context (across Wales) our Primary School attendance is ranked at 16<sup>th</sup> and Secondary 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Schools in NPT have secured an improvement in pupil attendance in both sectors, in particular in the primary sector with a 1.6% rise.
- The attendance data for Primary aged pupils on FSM for 2013-14 was 93.01%, an increase of 1.9% from 2012, surpassing the target for July 2015 by 0.5%. The attendance of pupils not on FSM for 2013-14 was 95.12%
- The attendance data for secondary aged pupils on FSM for 2013-14 was 89.94% an increase of 1.6% since 2012. In order to meet the target for July 2015 of 90% a further increase of 0.06% is needed. The attendance of pupils not on FSM for 2013-14 was 94.48%
- There has been a rise in fixed and permanent exclusions in the Secondary sector and a rise in fixed exclusions in the Primary sector which NPT are actively working on to decrease.

**Objective 7 (b)** – Reduce gaps in the educational performance experienced by pupils due to their protected characteristics; educational attainment.

#### **What did we do?**

- Our Minority Ethnic Achievement Service supports pupils who have English as an additional language and pupils from minority ethnic groups who may be at risk of underachievement. Bilingual and multilingual staff have supported learners to take examinations in Polish and other first languages, with pupils achieving great successes

- Estyn assessed the number of effective and highly effective schools as 68.35% (changed from previously good/outstanding). Of this number, 51.89% of all schools were deemed effective and 16.46% of all schools highly effective.
- The number of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) for 2014 was 3.8%, an improvement on the previous year of 4.4%.
- Three of the four key stage literacy measures improved and at least met their forecast performance for the year. One of the measures (at key stage 4) maintained performance but was below its forecast for the year.
- All four key stage numeracy measures have improved although two measures did not achieve the forecast performance for the year.

**Objective 8** – Expand data collection to all protected characteristics with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012.

**Gender Pay Objective** - to further develop pay/employment data to better understand the reasons for the gender pay gap and to identify any actions which may be feasible to close the pay gap.

Under its commitment to developing data in relation to the protected characteristics, and pay and employment data, we have established a development project under the Efficiencies Programmes Board. Dedicated resource has been allocated to this project, with the aim of improving the quality of the data held on the integrated HR/Payroll I.T. system, VISION, and to improve the quality of the data that can be extracted from the database. The project plan includes addressing the requirements for complete data collection for equality monitoring purposes.

### **Steps taken to meet the equality objectives**

The focus for 2014-2015 has been the review of the equality objectives. We have been conscious of ongoing financial challenges, reduced capacity, greater expectations and changing demographic in Neath Port Talbot

and these have prompted an early review of our objectives. However, we continued to work to meet the equality objectives while bearing in mind the revision of and the potential changes to the objectives.

During the year we have concentrated efforts on improving areas which have greatest impact on people lives including the accessibility of our website and improving the equality impact assessment process. We have not, however, neglected other objective areas.

As our equality objectives were linked to our Corporate Improvement Priorities and by undertaking the actions identified to meet these priorities we have been able to make progress across a number of our equality objectives. Progress against our improvement priorities can be found in the Corporate Improvement Plan Annual Report 2014-2015. **(INSERT LINK when available)**

In light of the increasingly difficult financial situation we have had to find alternative actions with the aim of protecting people with protected characteristics from the worst impacts of funding reductions, with children, young people and vulnerable people being identified as priority groups.

The Older Persons' Council continues to meet with Cabinet to highlight, discuss and consider solutions to issues which affect the independence and quality of life of people over the age of 50. Topics that have been considered include the closure of hospital facilities, the role of the voluntary sector within the current financial climate of cutbacks, the implications of some closures of leisure /learning facilities across the county borough

While the Black and Minority Ethnic Forum begun the year on an encouraging note it lost some of its momentum lessened as the year progressed. We have acknowledged that the Forum requires greater support in meeting its potential and this has been reflected in the revised equality objectives.

We continue to be mindful that our work to progress our equality objectives does not lose sight of our commitments under our Welsh Language Scheme. Progress on the Scheme is reported in a separate document, the [Welsh Language Scheme Annual Monitoring Report 2014-2015](#). The introduction of the Welsh Language Standards in autumn 2015 will bring with them new challenges at a time of increasing financial and resource pressures

## **Identifying and collecting relevant information**

Engagement with members of the public, partners, local communities and interest groups to gather information to help shape equality objectives and other strategies, policies and plans as well as to influence the delivery of our services remains our priority.

We are aware that the identification and collection of information remains a key element particularly of the equality impact assessment process. We continually work to improve the collection and analysis of the data we hold in relation to service users and staff and are conscious of weaknesses in this area. This was recognised during the revision of the equality objectives and actions have been identified to resolve this.

By holding an equality briefing in September 2014 we provided officers and members with a better understanding of equalities issues; an opportunity to meet/engage with representatives of existing networks/groups; an opportunity to be better informed when considering equality impact assessments/consultation in relation to proposed service and budget changes.

## **How we met the general duty**

- Standing on the shoulders the theme for Black History Month 2014 was celebrated in Neath Port Talbot by local mainstream and special schools through music and reading.
- Cwmtawe Comprehensive School Choir attended the National event in Newport in September to celebrate Black History Month
- We completed works in relation to Disabled Facilities Grant in 252 days on average (target 285 days).
- During 2014-15 we completed more Disabled Facilities Grants, 323 this year (287 last year) due to the average cost of works being lower than predicted allowing the budget to go further and the introduction of the Rapid Adaptation Grants process which took smaller jobs out of the process
- Work has begun to provide a new fully accessible 3-11secondary school, Ysgol Bae Baglan.

- While the Black and Minority Ethnic Forum begun the year on an encouraging note its momentum lessened as the year progressed. We have acknowledged that the Forum required greater support in meeting its potential and this have been reflected in the revised equality objectives
- The Older Persons' Council has helped promote Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council's Minority Elder Advocacy Service and Voices Have Spoken project.
- We continue to support the Older Persons' Council to ensure it continues as a crucial engagement mechanism to provide independence and information for older people
- As a council we endorsed the Dublin Declaration on Age-Friendly Cities and Communities in Europe 2013, where it is within our area of responsibility and economically feasible to do so.
- Cwmtawe Comprehensive School Choir was part of the 100 voice choir that took part in the launch of Black History Month in Newport in September
- The Minority Ethnic Achievement Service was a finalist in the National Union of Teachers Blair Peach Award 2014 and was specially mentioned at the National Union of Teachers annual conference for their work with pupils for whom English is an Additional Language and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds who may be at risk of underachievement.
- Duan Li, Chinese Language Assistant worked with the Minority Ethnic Achievement Service and a number of schools in Neath Port Talbot sharing Chinese language and culture and provided support with interpreting/ translating with Chinese families and schools.
- Three schools in Neath Port Talbot entered the Show Racism the Red Card competition with Sandfields Comprehensive School the overall winner of the competition with their display about Nelson Mandela.
- Black Asian Minority Ethnic Taxi Association was officially launched in June by the Mayor Cllr. Huw James. The launch was supported by the Council, Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council, the police, other taxi

associations and taxi drivers themselves. The Associations is a useful platform to voice the concerns of its members and liaise effectively with agencies to tackle negative attitudes and hate incidents.

- We held an equality briefing in September 2014 provided officers and elected members with an opportunity to hear from our local equality groups, to better understand their concerns and encourage greater dialogue and engagement.

## **Equality Impact Assessments, Training and Procurement**

### **Equality Impact Assessments**

We recognise the continuing importance of equality impact assessments and during 2014-2015 we have been keen to explore how best to improve the assessment process.

Following a brief evaluation we concluded that a more thorough audit was required and this has been included in our revised Strategic Equality Plan. We anticipate that following this audit a programme of training will be required to build on the improvements already made to date.

We have continued to focus our attention on ensuring officers and elected members receive training on undertaking impact assessments. In addition we have included consultation as major part of the training.

The financial challenges we continue to face have necessitated hard decisions for services and the overall negative impact that these decisions have had cannot be avoided. However, we have made every effort to mitigate these impacts wherever possible and that our identified priority groups, children, young people and vulnerable people are protected from the full impact of the cuts.

We are aware of the need to continue to improve the process. This was recognised during the review of the Equality objectives with the inclusion of an action to audit the assessments and take forward any recommendations for improvement.



## **Training**

Training continues to be an important element in meeting our equality commitments. Training has been provided to elected members, staff and partners during 2014-15.

Our training section have arranged and delivered training to private and voluntary partner care providers as well as to the private sector that provide services on our behalf. In addition our education service have provided a number of equality training sessions to school governors and head teachers.

A wide range of topics, including human trafficking and Roma awareness, have been arranged as part of our work on community cohesion with the regional community cohesion coordinator. These sessions have been well patronised by staff and members

A series of training sessions on understanding and undertaking equality impact assessments was delivered by the Welsh Local Government Association to both officers and elected members. This training was well attended and more targeted training will be arranged for 2015.

## **Procurement**

The procurement service is mindful of its legal obligations not only with regard to the spending of public money but also to equalities and works with service managers during the entire process to ensure that equality issues are considered at every stage. It works to ensure a consistent approach to procurement across a wide range of supplies, services and works. Tendering paperwork includes relevant guidance as well as requiring statements and evidence of compliance with the public sector general duty.

## **Specific Employment Information**

Employment Information (INSERT LINK when available) for the period 2014-2015 has been reported separately.

The data has been analysed by the protected characteristics of gender, race, disability and age and by specific criteria. While the data in relation to these characteristics is of good quality there are gaps in the information that

we are currently able to collect in relation to the following protected characteristics: gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief and sexual orientation.

The data is either for the 12 month period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015, or, where appropriate, a snapshot of the workforce on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

### **Revision of the Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives**

Work to revise the Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives was begun during 2014-2015, through active engagement with equality groups, elected members and officers. From an early stage it was identified that the objectives were still relevant but that actions to meet each one required amendment to reflect progress made to date, the changing needs of people who share protected characteristics, the work that was already being undertaken as well as the financial climate.

The Strategic Equality Plan acknowledges that we are working through large scale changes in order to respond to the continuing climate of austerity. The emphasis placed on further improvements to equality impact assessments, public information and engagement is part of our response to the financial challenges that we face and is focused on working hard to understand the potential consequences of service cuts, reductions and changes, especially on groups who share a protected characteristic.

Based on the information gathered a revised Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives were drafted and was subject to a period of public consultation during summer 2015. Following consultation amendments were made to the Strategic Equality Plan and the inclusion of additional actions under some objectives, the Strategic Equality Plan was agreed by the Policy and Resources Cabinet Board on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015, and is anticipated to be approved by Council on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015.