

STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN

ANNUAL REPORT

2013 – 2014

Introduction

Progress Made Against Our Equality Objectives:

- Objective 1** – Address harassment discrimination and other threats to personal safety experienced by people due to their protected characteristics
- Objective 2** – Improve access to information by meeting the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- 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
- Objective 4** – Monitor information and data effectively in order to identify disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics
- Objective 5** – Deliver staff training in line with the Equality Act requirements
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Introduction

During 2013-2014 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.

We have been successful in making progress against some of the equality objectives identified in our Strategic Equality Plan but are also conscious that areas remain where the rate of progress has been limited. This limited progress has been due to a number of factors including the increasing budgetary constraints, a reduced workforce and the consequent need to re-prioritise resources.

However, this does not mean we have abandoned our commitments and principles to the equalities agenda but recognise the need to re-focus our efforts to achieve more with less over the coming years. In order that our equality objectives reflect the current climate we, in association with the various equalities groups will undertake a review of our equality objectives during 2014-2015.

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?

- Members of Disability Network Action Group have not only undergone training to be more aware of hate crime but have also undertaken train the trainer sessions in order for them to deliver hate crime training.
- Raising awareness of and combatting disability hate crime was identified as a priority for our community cohesion work in Neath Port Talbot. Council officers and the managers and staff of the various community first clusters have undergone awareness training.
- A number of racial hate incidents were highlighted to officers and police at a meeting with Black and Minority Ethnic taxi drivers. These incidents were investigated and have now been resolved.

- Increased engagement with the reinvigorated Black and Minority Ethnic Forum has resulted in promoting greater confidence within the communities to raise and address issues.
- As part of our work on community cohesion, training sessions to raise awareness of hate crime were arranged for officers. 83 officers attended these courses, with 74 respondents (97.6%) stating that their understanding of hate crime had increased.
- 2 Train the Trainer sessions were delivered to the Youth Service and an awareness raising session was delivered to the Youth Council.

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 Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop opened in Neath on White Ribbon Day, 25th November 2013, to provide information, advice and guidance to all residents of the County Borough. However, in light of recent funding difficulties there is a need to examine the sustainability of this service.
- A number of engagement events took place around White Ribbon Day on 25th November 2013 and the launch of the One Stop Shop.
- Elected members and officers received a briefing from the Domestic Abuse Coordinator and partners, at which two victims of domestic abuse spoke of their experiences of the services they received.
- A number of multi-agency and single agency domestic abuse training programmes took place during the year, increasing the number of frontline professionals with an understanding of domestic abuse and its impact.
- 356 frontline professionals completed domestic abuse training with 100% of attendees reported increased knowledge after training.
- 4781 young people completed domestic abuse prevention programmes with 80% reporting increased knowledge after the programmes.
- 36 adults completed domestic abuse awareness training programmes and all agreed that their knowledge had increased.

- We continued to work in partnership to deliver school and youth programmes to increase children and young people's awareness of domestic abuse and improve their understanding of its consequences.
- We launched our domestic abuse policy on White Ribbon Day.

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 started to re-develop our website. Of the 3000 pages on our site, monitoring showed that 80% of visits were to just 250 pages. Work to remove out dated pages has begun and 400 pages were removed during the period.
- We are also working with services to ensure that their webpages are fully translated.
- We are working on redesigning and modernising our homepages, and ultimately all our webpages, to make it easier to use and improve access to our services. Between 25 and 30 pages have been completely redesigned including, for example, Councillors and committees, Strategies plans and policies, Have your say. See Appendix.
- Various equality groups have worked with us to finely tune some of our online services including bulky household collections, refuse and recycling equipment requests, van permits, pest control and Neighbourhood Services requests (pot holes, street lighting, bin emptying).
- The Disability Network Action Group has worked with the recycling service in the production of accessible information on the new recycling service.
- We have begun to explore the possibility of including British Sign Language information videos on our website for key services.

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?

- Disability Network Action Group has worked with the recycling service on producing accessible calendars and information on the new scheme being piloted in various locations in the county borough.
- We have developed ‘How to...’ guides on a variety of topics, including producing accessible information, which are available to all staff.

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?

- With the Black and Minority Ethnic Forum, we are beginning to explore what support is available to older members of the community to access services as well as overcome social isolation.
- Due to work pressures, social services equalities group has not met for some time but is to be re-established. The group will oversee the work of gathering and utilising data for more effective identification of gaps in service provision.
- The various projects aimed at Black and Minority Ethnic older people and carers in the county borough, which are delivered by Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council and Neath Port Talbot Carers, are helping to address service accessibility issues within these groups as well as assist with aspects of social isolation.
- We held regular consultation events across all service groups; further events are to be held to target specific needs of service users in relation to equality issues.
- We consulted on our Corporate Parenting Strategy during an information day for young people and the data collected at the event helped inform the strategy.
- Our ‘How to...’ guides have been developed to help services manage a range of communications task and include guides on producing accessible information and organising meetings and events.
- Work has begun on auditing the public information for Learning Disability Services. The results will contribute to the Learning Disability Strategy, which is currently being developed.

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

What did we do?

- 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.
- 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
- 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?

- Elected members and key officers have received training on Equality Impact Assessments, delivered by the Welsh Local Government Association. More specific training in relation to elected members' role in scrutinising equality impact assessments has been arranged for the autumn 2014. We are the first council in Wales where Cabinet Members have participated in this training.
- In association with the Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator we arranged number of training sessions on topics including human trafficking, disability hate crime, domestic abuse, safeguarding: Roma awareness and transgender.

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 £150k to improve access to buildings across the county borough.
- We carried out a feasibility study on creating a disabled toilet on the second floor of Port Talbot Civic Centre.
- We made alterations to the reception desk, front elevation and a room at the Cross Community Centre, Pontardawe, as well as installing automatic doors to the lobby.
- Coedffranc Infants, Gnoll Primary and Rhydyfro Primary schools benefited from work to improve access to the buildings and facilities
- Alterations to the public toilets in Crynant were made to create disabled unisex toilets.

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 secured funding for the redevelopment of Port Talbot Parkway Station. Work has already started and through the invaluable input from local disability groups, the new station is on track to be fully accessible.
- Work on Neath Railway Station has ensured that accessing the station particularly for disabled passengers, has been greatly improved.
- We secured funding from the Welsh Government's Vibrant and Viable Places programme which will fund projects in Port Talbot including town centre housing; Parkway Integrated Transport Hub; Plaza Arts and Cultural Centre; and new links connecting the town with the surrounding area. Engagement on these projects with the various equalities groups will ensure that equality issues will be considered appropriately.
- Working with Celtic Leisure programmes offered in the area have included the National Exercise Referral Scheme and disability dance and sport specific projects such as junior Netball and tennis.

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

What did we do?

- Primary school attendance for 2012-2013 academic year was 93.0%, marginally lower than the previous year (93.1%) and in Secondary schools at 92.6%, marginally higher than the previous year (92.3%).
- All schools have signed up to a partnership agreement to raise levels of pupil attendance.
- For the academic year 2013-2014, we have seen a steady increase in attendance in both sectors, as at the end of May 2014, primary schools were 94.58% and secondary schools at 93.41%.
- In the primary sector, we reduced the number of days lost through fixed term exclusions from 191 days to 174 in the 2012-2013 academic year.
- In the secondary sector, we reduced the number of days lost through fixed term exclusions from 1,658 days to 1,568 in the 2012-2013 academic year. We have achieved these reductions by constantly working with schools and using a range of strategies including managed moves to other schools.

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

What did we do?

- We saw a steady improvement in performance across schools in the county borough for year 11 pupils. The wider external points scored (including 'capped' points) by 16 years old has increased on the previous year. Improvement in teaching and learning practices is leading to an improvement in results.
- There have been termly meetings and training days for primary and secondary school literacy co-ordinators and Heads of English departments, to share good practice and useful information.
- Reading strategies and developing resources for GCSE English, training on guided and shared reading, reading behaviours, reading interventions and phonics have been delivered to well over half of the primary schools (including three secondary schools). Training on toolkits for writing, have been delivered to 18 primary schools.

- 20 of our primary schools have received a two day training course on Numicon (an approach to develop children into confident problem-solvers and raise achievement across all ability levels). Feedback to date tells us that we are seeing a positive impact on pupils' numerical understanding and the continued use should improve results overall.
- We held a number of training days to help schools diagnose national test data, highlight areas for improvement and to develop reasoning and mental maths strategies.
- We carried out numeracy audits across all schools and reviewed the recommendations and actions in order to help schools meet the national numeracy framework.
- All primary schools now use and share data from INCERTS (a tool to track pupil assessment). Through analysis of this data correlations are drawn between attainment, targets and vulnerability and appropriate actions identified to address any issues.
- A diagnostic tool to analyse the national maths tests has been devised by our Education Development and Inclusion Service which is now being used nationally.

Objective 8 – Expand data collection to all protected characteristics with effect from 1st 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.

To realise our commitment to developing data in relation to the protected characteristics, and pay and employment data, we have established a development project under the Better Simpler Cheaper Programmes Board.

We have dedicated resources have 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

In December 2013 the Black and Minority Ethnic Forum was re-established and a number of issues and concerns were identified during its inaugural event. Together we have been successful in addressing a variety of issues and concerns, most notably working with Black and Minority Ethnic taxi drivers to tackle problems and racial abuse they were experiencing.

Through our work together the Forum has grown in confidence, even over a short space of time, and is beginning to realise our hope of encouraging people to take a more active role in their communities and Neath Port Talbot as a whole; a Forum member is one our 'faces of recycling' in our advertising campaign.

We have continued to work with the Disability Network Action Group to identify and address issues and barriers for disabled people in accessing services. The Group helped us test our on line applications prior to them going live and has assisted our waste services section in the development of literature for the new recycling service.

We have worked with the Older Persons' Council over many years and their contribution to service planning and delivery has been greatly valued. Regular meetings with Cabinet have provided the opportunity 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 unpaid carers, the impact of Welfare reform and transport, in particular bus services.

Members of the Older Persons' Council have been recognised in the Neath Port Adult Learner Awards for their achievements in improving their own IT skills and their contribution towards encouraging older people to take up learning in later life.

Neath Port Talbot Youth Council meets periodically with the Cabinet to share information gathered by young people and to express their opinions. These meetings have already produced outcomes that benefit both young people and services alike.

A Disability Youth Forum, a sub group of the Youth Council, was set up to consider ideas and issues that face disabled young people.

We are 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 2013-2014](#).

Time and circumstances have overtaken the actions that we originally identified to help meet the objectives. 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.

However, as the objectives were linked to the priorities in our [Corporate Improvement Plan 2013-2016](#) by undertaking the actions identified to meet these priorities we have been able to make progress across a number of our equality objectives.

With the financial and staffing pressures facing us we recognise that actions to meet current objectives have been limited. The objectives that were appropriate at the outset of the Plan now need reviewing against a background of reduced capacity, greater expectations and a changing demographic in Neath Port Talbot.

Identifying and collecting relevant information

We have endeavoured to engage with members of the public, partners, local communities and interest groups to gather information to help shape not only our equality objectives but also our various strategies, policies and plans and to influence the delivery of our services.

Identification and collection of information is a key element of the equality impact assessment process and we are continually working to improve the data we hold in relation to service users and staff. While some services routinely collect and analyse information this is not so consistent across all services. Gaps in knowledge identified during the assessment process are being addressed within individual action plans and will be monitored as part of the assessment process.

Services have been increasingly aware during the last year of the need to engage more with the various communities in the county borough and a range of engagement activities have taken place. However there is still some way to go to routinely involve communities and the public generally, as part of service development.

How we met the general duty

- We completed the first phase of the Pathway to Independence project. The project has been helping individuals to have more control over their lives by giving them access to a greater range of housing options so that they can have their say about where they live and who they live with. This has meant that a number of people have been able to move from residential care to their own accommodation with ongoing support.
- Through our 'Improving Residential Care' partnership with Grŵp Gwalia, Llys y Seren on Moor Road Port Talbot was completed and opened in June 2014. The home has a dementia-friendly design incorporating best practice principles. Llys y Seren was the first residential care home to be completed as part of this partnership.
- Further residential care homes are in the pipeline with preferred sites at Caewern, Neath and Eastern Avenue, Croeserw.
- We processed 287 disabled facilities grants, lower than what we forecasted (310) but have continued to improve on the average time taken to deliver the grant in an average time of 204 days.
- The COASTAL project supported 792 participants with disabilities to achieve one or more positive outcomes which includes gaining a qualification, entering employment or further learning. The project found employment for 13 of the 22 Remploy workers enrolled since December 2013.
- In partnership with the Enfys Foundation, the project has set up and run a canteen for the contractors on the new Swansea University Campus construction site.
- We appointed a recycling officer in March (2014) to undertake community engagement on the promotion of the recycling scheme. Following an engagement meeting a member of the Black and Minority Ethnic Forum agreed to be one of our 'faces of recycling' in a poster campaign.
- The new state of the art school, Awel y Môr, opened its doors in September 2013.
- The reinvigorated Black and Minority Ethnic Forum has begun to establish itself as a significant voice for the various communities and is working to help address issues identified at Forum meetings including the social isolation of older members of the community.

- With the Black and Minority Ethnic Forum, we helped support Black and Minority Ethnic taxi drivers resolve a number of concerns relating to their work.
- We worked with the police to resolve two incidents of racial abuse which were reported during a Black and Minority Ethnic Forum meeting.
- Pupils from Cwrt Sart, Dŵr y Felin and Llangatwg comprehensive schools all took part in activities to mark Black History Month, culminating in the event, 'I Have a Dream', being held in Pontardawe Arts Centre.

Equality Impact Assessments, Training and Procurement

Equality Impact Assessments

We raised the profile of equality impact assessments during 2013-2014 particularly in relation to the budget setting process. We updated the toolkit to ensure that community cohesion was included as a consideration and we ensured that training on undertaking assessments was available for officers and Members.

In light of the advice following the outcome of a number of judicial reviews nationwide we have made the process clearer for officers and members in the reporting, scrutinising and recording of the assessments.

The importance of assessing the impact of the various budget proposals has resulted in the identification of actions to mitigate the impact of the proposals to be identified, fully considered and where appropriate implemented, as was the case in the review of the public library service.

We have been acutely aware of the overall negative impact our budgetary decisions have had on people with protected characteristics and have made every effort to ensure that our identified priority groups, children, young people and vulnerable people are protected from the full impact of the cuts.

Although there has been an improvement, we cannot be complacent and will continue to improve the process to ensure that we are fully aware of the impact our policies and services have on people living, working and visiting Neath Port Talbot

Training

We continue to consider training an important element of our work to meet our equality objectives. Equalities training has always featured in the training programme for both staff and elected members and this year we enhanced training on equality impact assessments.

In addition to the training provided for officers and elected members our training section have arranged and delivered training to the private sector who provide services on our behalf, as well as to private and voluntary partner care providers. Short sessions on equalities were delivered to school governors and head teachers by the education service.

As part of our work on community cohesion with the regional community cohesion coordinator we have arranged and participated in training sessions on a wide range of topics including human trafficking.

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 in depth training has been arranged for 2014.

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](#) for the period 2013-2014 has been reported separately.

Next Steps

During 2014-2015, we will start to review our equality objectives taking into account people's needs and requirements, our and our partner's resources as well as any external pressures placed upon local government. With the budgetary situation facing us over the next few years we must be mindful not to waste our resources but to concentrate on a few priorities that will have the greatest impact. We will take every opportunity to engage fully with people to determine if the current objectives remain relevant and explore the need to identify alternative or additional objectives.

We will be reviewing the employment equality objectives in conjunction with all recognised trade unions during the financial year ending 31 March 2015.

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Mayoralty - 2014/2015



MAYOR
- Cllr. H.N. James -



DEPUTY MAYOR
- Cllr. A.P.H. Davies -

The County Borough Council of Neath Port Talbot comprises 64 elected members representing 42 divisions of Neath, Northern Lliw and Port Talbot. A Divisional Map is available on the website from which you can access the Directory of Local Councillors. Details of the Directorates of the Authority can be obtained through our 'Contact us' pages.

There are also [19 Community Councils](#) in the County Borough area.

The population of the County Borough is 137,052 with an electorate of 111,087. The next County Borough elections will take place in 2017.

Useful Links:
[H.M. Lord Lieutenant of West Glamorgan](#)

Redesigned Webpage



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- » [Western Valleys Strategy](#)
- » [Asset Management Plan 2011-16](#)
- » [Pay Policy Statement](#)

Plans and Policies

This section gives you access to our Council Plans and Policies:

The Local Service Board's (LSB) Single Integrated Plan replaces the Community Plan 2010-2020, Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy 2011-2014, Community Safety Plan 2009-2012 and Children and Young Peoples' Plan 2011-2014. It sets out the joint vision, priorities and actions of key organisations in the county borough.

Our [Corporate Improvement Plan](#) is one of the Council's main strategic policy documents, which contains information on what the Council's top priorities are for improvement for the next three years.

Our [Annual Report](#) gives a 'backward look', accounting for our overall performance during the last financial year.

[What our regulators said](#) - Each year, the Wales Audit Office (WAO) is required to produce an Annual Improvement Report (AIR) for each local authority in Wales.

Our [Code of Corporate Governance](#) describes how we take decisions in order to achieve our aims and objectives.

The [Equalities](#) section contains details of the Council's equality schemes and policies.

Our [Older People's Strategy](#) aims to make the best opportunities to improve services and community, volunteer and civic participation.

The [Unitary Development Plan](#) was adopted in March 2008. It is now the development plan for the whole of the Neath Port Talbot area.

The [Western Valleys Strategy](#) aims to improve the lives of people living in our Valley communities.

The [Asset Management Plan 2011-16](#) sets out the Council's proposals for the effective use of its property assets to support the delivery of quality public services and major regeneration initiatives.

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Last Updated: 12.02.2014 at 13:42

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Redesigned Webpage

The screenshot displays the redesigned website for Neath Port Talbot Council. The header features the council's logo on the left, which includes a castle and the text 'Neath Port Talbot County Borough' and 'Ymunedd Sirol Castell-neath Port Talbot'. To the right of the logo is the text 'Welcome to Neath Port Talbot'. Further right are links for 'Text Only', 'Accessibility', 'Cookies', 'Translate', and 'Cymraeg'. A 'Contact Us' button with icons for a person, a phone, and an envelope is also present. Below the header is a navigation bar with buttons for 'Home', 'Residents', 'Business', and 'Visitors', followed by a 'Google Custom Search' box. A secondary navigation bar lists 'A to Z of Council Services' with letters A through Z. The main content area starts with a breadcrumb trail: 'You are here: Home Page » Your Council » Strategies, Plans and Policies'. The title 'Strategies, Plans and Policies' is followed by six service cards: 'Performance and Improvement' (with a line graph icon), 'Equalities' (with a group of people icon), 'Partnership Working' (with a grid of letters icon), 'Single Integrated Plan' (with a map icon), 'Welsh Language Scheme' (with a globe icon), and 'Armed Forces Covenant' (with an airplane icon). Each card includes a brief description. At the bottom left, there are two sections: 'More' with a list of documents (Unitary Development Plan, Asset Management Plan, Western Valleys Strategy, Pay Policy Statement) and 'Page Details'.

Performance and Improvement
Details of our priorities / assessment of our performance

Equalities
Learn what equality means in Neath Port Talbot

Partnership Working
How the Local Service Board delivers better public services

Single Integrated Plan
The joint vision and actions of key organisations in Neath Port Talbot

Welsh Language Scheme
How we promote parity between the English and Welsh languages


Armed Forces Covenant
Find out how the Armed Forces Covenant can help you

More

- Unitary Development Plan
- Asset Management Plan
- Western Valleys Strategy
- Pay Policy Statement


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Talk to Us

This section offers you a number of ways to talk to us:

You can Ask the Leader, Councillor Alun Thomas;

The Contact Us section has details of how you can get in touch via phone or email as well as details of the postal addresses of the Council buildings and Civic Centres;

The Local Service Board aims to respond more effectively to citizens needs;

Let us know if you have any comments, compliments or complaints;

The consultation section offers you the opportunity to have your say on our current public consultations.

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