

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

Annual Report 2020-2021

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Introduction

This annual report, published in accordance to The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, provides an overview of our work in developing the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024, meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty. This annual report also sets out progress against the six equality objectives and associated actions set out in the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 for the period 1 April to 31 March 2021.

We began revising the Strategic Equality Plan during 2019-2020 anticipating its publication in April 2020 - however, circumstances overtook us and the Strategic Equality Plan was finally published in October 2020 with actions to meet the objectives published in February 2021.

Progress against our equality objectives and associated actions is reported either on a full year basis or for the period 1 January – 31 March 2021, indicated accordingly.

How we got here and the Public Sector Equality Duty

Development of the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

During 2019-2020, we revised our Strategic Equality Plan taking into account various national and local research findings; latest data available to the Council and issues raised by local equality groups during meetings of our Equality and Community Cohesion Group (consisting of senior officers of the Council, the police, representatives of local equality groups, organisations and communities).

Local research was carried out with members of our Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, people with experiences of low income, disabled people, members of the Gypsy and Traveller community and our local communities in general. A number of common threads were identified throughout the process, including hate crime/incidents, poverty and barriers when accessing services, which were consequently incorporated into the equality objectives.

We were just weeks away from presenting the Strategic Equality Plan and our revised equality objectives to Cabinet and its subsequent publication in April 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and we entered the first period of lockdown. All executive reporting arrangements were disrupted and we mobilised an emergency response to the developing national emergency. This had a massive impact on the delivery of our services. Some of our services closed down to assist in reducing the spread of the disease, whilst other services changed so that critical services could operate safely. In addition, new services were established to support our communities through the crisis.

In light of the national situation at the end of March 2020, the Equality and Human Rights Commission suspended statutory deadlines for publishing Strategic Equality Plans and equality objectives until October 2020.

However, while lockdown delayed the publication of the Strategic Equality Plan it also provided an opportunity to reconsider the appropriateness of our equality objectives, and the proposed actions, in light of the unfolding impact of coronavirus on members of our most vulnerable communities, especially on those from our Black and minority ethnic communities.

At an early stage in the outbreak, we recognised that the Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives would need to be reviewed to address the impact the pandemic was having on our local communities. It became increasingly apparent as weeks went on that while all communities were being affected, Black and minority ethnic communities were being affected disproportionately; in matters of health, as key workers, with the severe effects on employment as well as accessible education for children and young people.

The horrific killing of George Floyd on 25 May 2020, along with other events in our recent history, as well as the devastating impact the pandemic has had on Black and minority ethnic communities has brought into sharp focus the deep seated negative attitudes and behaviours that remain towards people from these communities. As a consequence, it was recognised that the equality objectives and actions would need to be reviewed to ensure the impact of these events on our local communities were addressed.

In his address to Council in July 2020, the Leader gave a commitment to initiate a fresh look at how we work with our Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in Neath Port Talbot to achieve equality, equity and social cohesion and to bring about societal change to demonstrate that Black Lives Matter.

This accentuated the need to further review our equality objectives and actions particularly in light of evidence provided to UK and national government committees. As well as, research findings on the impact of the Coronavirus outbreak, the reported concerns of members of Black and minority ethnic communities in direct response to the Black Lives Matter movement and evidence used in the initial development of our equality objectives.

The Equality and Community Cohesion Group, instrumental in the initial development of the equality objectives, again played a crucial role in the assessment and collectively we were satisfied that our equality objectives were an accurate reflection of those areas that cause concern, distress and anguish for many. The equality objectives were published in the [Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024](#) in October 2020.

However, the actions required further review and alternative actions to better meet the objectives. These were developed with the involvement of our workforce and of our communities, most notably our Black and minority ethnic communities, this has been invaluable in helping identify actions that not only help address the impacts of COVID-19 but also the wider inequalities faced by these communities. The revised [actions](#) were published in January 2021.

We continue to work with our various communities to explore and better understand people's lived experiences and to translate these into relevant actions to help us meet our equality objectives going forward.

BAME or BME?

Following events in summer 2020 there appeared to be a marked transition to the use of BAME across government departments, media and academia. While no doubt this was well intentioned to provide a more encompassing collective terminology for communities, it led to the over use and misuse of the term which caused a backlash from various individuals and minority ethnic communities.

We along with many other public bodies adopted this terminology but tried to be mindful of its intended use – an acronym minority ethnic communities rather than used as a word/community in its own right. The NPT BME Community Association were also sceptical about the use of the acronym and informed us that they would prefer the use of BME and ethnic minority. BAME is considered controversial because people are using it as a word as opposed to an acronym e.g. 'BAME woman,' 'BAME solicitor,' 'BAME children... BAME would be ok to use if

each word was written out, but people do not often do this. Over time... (there is a)...fear it will become a meaningless buzzword, thus creating an additional barrier to engagement as some people may want to distance themselves from this word’.

Consequently, going forward we will return to using BME (Black and minority ethnic) or minority ethnic communities or use the individual names of the minority ethnic community in our documentation.

Street names and monuments in Neath Port Talbot

In light of, and in response to the BLM movement and the numerous anti-racism activities held following the killing of George Floyd in May 2020, the Leader of the Council in his statement to Council in July 2020 recognised that ‘there remain deep seated attitudes and behaviours towards people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities which simply cannot continue’ and took ‘this opportunity today to initiate a fresh look at how we work with our Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in Neath Port Talbot to achieve equality, equity and social cohesion’. As part of this call for action, a local survey was undertaken to identify street names and monuments in Neath Port Talbot that had connections with the slave trade.

At the same time the First Minister announced plans ‘to re-examine the way some of our public monuments and buildings are valued and consider what they say about us, our society today and our shared history... to undertake an audit of Wales’ historic monuments and statues, and the names of streets and public buildings, and identify those sites and names that are associated with the history of black communities in Wales, and in particular the slave trade’ ...Informed by the outcome of this work, we will move to a second phase to determine how we can move forward together and address the concerns it highlights... (and) to determine how we can move forward together and address the concerns it highlights.

We will address the findings of the audits as part of the implementation of the Council's responsibilities for a more holistic approach to both historic as well as future commemorative practices as identified in the final version of the Welsh Government's Race Equality Action Plan, which is anticipated in autumn 2021.

Race Equality Action Plan (REAP)

The BME Community Association (the Association) carried out community engagement, funded by Welsh Government to help inform their [Race Equality Action Plan](#) (public consultation on the draft action plan closed on 15 July 2021).

The Association worked in partnership with our Community Safety Team and Vulnerable Learner's Service to produce two surveys, one aimed at adults, the other at young people. The aim of this engagement was to gain insight into the lived experiences of BME people in Neath Port Talbot, focusing on housing, community cohesion, education and employment. Both surveys produced similar results in relation to the local community, safety and social inclusion, with respondents agreeing that more needed to be done in relation to social integration and community events.

Engagement identified that in relation to education and achieving potential, local schools and educational settings were successful in ensuring that all pupils are treated fairly, however, more could be done to promote culture and diversity at school.

In terms of the workplace, half the respondents felt that people from BME communities do not receive as many opportunities to progress in the workplace and that there fewer opportunities for them to work in the public sector.

These findings were too late to be considered as part of the revision of the actions, but were submitted to Welsh Government for consideration in the development of the REAP and will be considered as part of our ongoing review of the relevance and appropriateness of the actions to meet our equality objectives.

[Our response during the pandemic](#)

Some of the key work is highlighted in the infographic below, which includes data from the first lockdown up to 31 March 2021.

Council response during the pandemic

NPT Safe & Well Service



Our NPT Safe & Well Service supported

2,600+ residents

698 volunteers registered



450+ food parcels delivered weekly



400+ weekly prescriptions delivered



Over 6,000 welfare calls to residents

Business Support

£47m Covid grants paid out to local businesses



2,242 business enquiries assisted resulting in advice, information or financial support

88 CHARITY/SPORTS CLUBS

received £10k each in grant support



Provided **£45m** Business Rates grant relief and

£8.9m High Street Business Rates relief



Pupil Support



...and 300 laptops provided to pupils and 940 laptops for teachers

Delivered road safety training via TEAMS to **over 5,000** pupils



5,213 pupils are claiming free school meals and **£3.9 million** in payments since first lockdown (up to 31st March 21)

8 hubs provided daily support to up to

250 children



45k face masks provided to pupils in September 2020

Council response during the pandemic

NPT Staff Support

1st council in England and Wales to introduce a "safe leave" policy for victims of domestic abuse working for the council who can take up to five days of paid "safe leave" to access support



 **OVER 700**

laptops provided to staff enabling homeworking

85

online employee training courses delivered to 3,809 attendees



800 NPT staff offered to step into different roles to help with COVID-19

Other Support

470 jobs



created/safeguarded as a result of financial support by the council

£19.4m

Council Tax support to 17,389 households



113,888 COVID-19 webpage views



Permanent accommodation secured for 258 homeless individuals or households

Accessible cycle routes increased by

6.6km

(during 2019/20 and 2020/21)



Homecare Staff; 200+ COVID trained and 10,700+ monthly visits to service users

50 playgrounds were made COVID safe



Working with Partners



Project managed construction of 340-bed field hospital at Llandarcy



used as a Mass Vaccination Centre



NPT Test, Trace and Protect Service contacted

31,079 people

up to 31st March 2021

BAME Coronavirus Vaccination Forum – tell me more campaign

A Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) COVID Communications Campaign Group was established to dispel the myths, give reassurances and present the facts, to ensure that everyone can make an informed decision about the vaccinations and to encourage take up. Leading figures from our local BME communities are members of the group and play a key role in delivering these messages.

We are supporting this campaign and some of our staff from our minority ethnic communities lent their support by providing short, written testimonials, photos and/or short video clips about the vaccination for use on the web, social media and other communications platforms.

The Tell Me More campaign continues.

Immbulance

One of our mobile libraries, which had come to the end of its working life, was donated to Swansea Bay University Health Board to be transformed into a mobile vaccination centre.

Within weeks, bookshelves, a wooden reception desk and carpet were stripped out and replaced with clinical white walls, a sink, vastly improved lighting, a vaccination fridge; secure storage cupboards for on the move, easy clean flooring and curtains to divide it into cubicles.

A wheelchair lift was retained to maintain easy access and a wireless internet connection installed so patient details can be entered straight onto the immunisation database.



The Immbulance, deployed on 25 February 2021 and believed to be the first of its kind in Wales, has been designed to reach people living in more remote communities and people from vulnerable groups who are unable to travel to vaccination centres or GP surgeries, either because of poor transport links or mobility issues.

The Time to Change Campaign

The Council signed up to the Time to Change Wales Campaign's Employer Pledge in September 2019, which provides a framework for employers to work within to support employees with their mental health. This is a workforce priority, as mental health related absence accounts for the highest number of days lost to sickness absence. Progress against the [action plan](#) is reported on a regular basis to the council's Equality and Community Cohesion Group and the Personnel Committee. A number of events have taken place to raise awareness of mental health and signposting to advice, guidance and support, and in 2021 the Council recruited a network of Champions from its workforce, to help in the mission to reduce the stigma associated with mental ill health and encourage our employees to talk about their mental wellbeing.

Equalities in Employment

Equalities in Employment information for the period 2020-2021 will be reported to the Equality and Community Cohesion Group and published towards the latter part of 2021-2022.

The data will be for the 12-month period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, or where appropriate, a snapshot of the workforce on 31 March 2021.

Our [gender pay gap report](#), published in June 2021, set out the difference between the average pay of the men and women who work in the Council in 2020. The pay data has been taken from the Council's workforce at:

31 March 2019, 3,784 employees which represents 1,277 (33.75%) males and 2,507 (66.25%) females

31 March 2020, 3,630 employees which represents 1,290 (35.5%) males and 2,340 (64.5%) females

The pay data excludes casual employees and all schools' employees.

The median gender pay gap (excluding schools) in 2019 was 3.93% while in 2020 our median gender pay gap has reduced to 3.44 %.

The median gender pay gap, including and excluding schools, is below the UK national average median gender pay gap of 15.5% in 2020.

Progress on Objectives

Education - to ensure children and young people are the best they can be

Priority	Action	Progress 2020-2021
<p>Priority 1.1 All Children and Young People will have improved levels of attainment</p>	<p>We will provide targeted support to families in need, including Armed Forces families, to reduce the potential for children to have an adverse childhood experience</p>	<p>The Welsh Government established Supporting Service Children in Education in Wales Fund` to help mitigate the effect that an Armed Forces lifestyle can have on Service children in our schools. It is administered by the Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru programme and we were awarded £9750 from the fund for the academic Year 2020-2021. The allocation was based on the number of service children in the area – currently 72 children in 26 schools.</p> <p>The Vulnerable Learners Service (VLS) have worked with the Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officer to work with Neath Port Talbot schools to deliver and address training around the barriers faced by service children.</p> <p>An additional grant of £8750 has been awarded for the academic year 2021-22 and plans on how to maximise its usage are currently being considered.</p>
	<p>We will continue to work with</p>	<p>The period of lock down in Wales prevented some</p>

	<p>schools and other relevant settings to support and provide access to work experience, training and professional development opportunities for those who are at risk of becoming not in education employment or training (NEETs) post 16</p>	<p>activity from continuing in particular work placements. However:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cynnydd Youth Engagement workers continued to work in school settings to support the most vulnerable young people. Much of this work focused on emotional wellbeing but for year 11's it also included a focus on transition and completing qualifications. (The Cynnydd project work with those aged between 11 and 24 years old who are at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training)). • Cynnydd support was provided virtually to young people not attending schools; workshops with careers and 1-1's, garden visits to go through work and transition support such as Education Maintenance Allowance forms and setting up bank accounts etc. Resources to complete qualifications were also delivered to homes. As a result of all of this, no young person missed out on the qualification they had been working towards. • Our Youth Service Legacy Team supported young people who have been identified as being at risk of becoming NEET from all secondary schools during this period. The interventions varied depending on the needs of the young person and the schools. Legacy Youth Workers supported 176 young people
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		<p>during this period (74 females and 102 males). The majority of this support was carried out via telephone calls although home visits and one to one support was delivered to young people who were particularly vulnerable or at risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual training sessions took place with young people attending online Construction Skills Certification Scheme Card training and Virtual Basic Food Hygiene courses. Young people were also supported with CV writing, interview, job application support and helping young people open up bank accounts, get their National Insurance Numbers, general forms of ID required such as Birth Certificates etc. • Legacy staff have been offering young people emotional wellbeing support to those young people who were struggling to re-engage with schools. • During this period, our Legacy Team engaged with young people to identify post 16 destinations and any barriers faced. Work to help engage with post 16 destinations and Careers Wales has begun and from April 2021 plans are in place to visit post 16 destinations such as Neath Port Talbot Colleges Group and Work Based Learning Provisions.
	<p>We will work with schools to identify those children who</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cynnydd provide opportunities for young people to complete a range of qualifications at KS4, which

	<p>require specific support at foundation phase and key stages</p>	<p>provide alternatives for young people who have barriers to engaging in mainstream education. These include Princes Trust, ASDA qualifications, work based learning qualifications and BTEC SWEET. To date 170 young people have achieved a qualification through Cynnydd.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wellbeing and Behaviour Service and Cynnydd, continued to support children and young people to enable them to understand any barriers to engaging with learning. This has included work with children and young people on social and emotional capabilities, trauma support plans and emotional regulation. Families have also been supported over this period; they have been given guidance and resources, such as play boxes, to continue this work at home through the lock down period. • The Educational Psychology Service, including the Early Years Educational Psychology Team work through a collaborative consultation model to help identify the needs of children and young people early. Where relevant, Early Years Educational Psychologists facilitate timely transition meetings from pre-school into Nursery / Foundation Phase, so that support can be provided from the outset. This may include support to develop early language skills, enhanced teaching assistant support or advice and guidance for school staff in relation to
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		<p>removing barriers to learning. For school aged children, the Educational Psychology Service offers a range of support and advice to all schools across all key stages in order to help identify children's needs and ensure the appropriate support is provided. This includes advice in relation to differentiation, training across a range of areas, consultation, assessment and also work with parents / carers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech & Language Therapy – A designated therapist supporting social and emotional behaviour disorder (SEBD) provisions in both primary & secondary phases with the aim to improve pupil's confidence and understanding. The therapist will support statemented pupils with speech and language provision. Referrals for individual pupils are made following discussion with the therapist. • Specific Learning Difficulties – Multi-sensory literacy packs allocated to secondary SEBD provisions to engage and measure progress for pupils with complex SEBD needs. The aim is to improve the pupil's confidence and self-esteem in all areas of literacy. • Occupational Therapy – A sensory pack of resources has been allocated to all Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), SEBD & Moderate
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		<p>Learning Difficulty (MLD) provisions. This includes a sensory equipment box allocated to each provision in both primary & secondary phases, along with specific training. In addition to the support and training offered to the specialist provisions, training in Sensory Circuits & Sensory processing have been delivered to schools with a high level of need and to the specialist provisions within Neath Port Talbot. This will support pupils and staff with sensory regulation. In addition to this, the Occupational Therapist has delivered Zones of Regulation training to mainstream schools and specialist provisions. It is a whole school approach to teach regulation and provides a common language to support positive mental health and skill development for all. The framework is designed to help move students toward more independent regulation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASD – to ensure progress is made for pupils within the ASD provisions, PECS training has been offered to all staff. This will ensure that each provision will have access to appropriately trained staff to enable our pupils to make progress with their communication skills. • Outdoor learning equipment allocated to all primary specialist provisions to enhance the pupils' outdoor learning experiences with an emphasis on sensory
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		play.
	We will work with schools to ensure all pupils, particularly those from low income families and those where COVID-19 has had particular impact, can access appropriate digital devices	<p>We provided 9,500 Chromebooks and 300 laptops to pupils to facilitate wellbeing support and engagement in learning.</p> <p>940 laptops were purchased for teachers to develop blended and distance practices further and support them to provide pupils with live or recorded sessions.</p>
	We will work with schools to identify those children who require enhanced non-academic support as a consequence of the impact of COVID-19 to help them to fulfil their potential	<p>The impact of the COVID-19 on pupils during the last year has been significant, from accessibility to digital devices to emotional wellbeing support and everything in between.</p> <p>Pupils previously identified and in receipt of support continued to do so while schools and our various services worked together to identify and support those who were particularly in need of support as a consequence of the impact of the pandemic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laptops and chrome books were distributed to many of our pupils, and staff, to ensure studies could continue. • 260 referrals (41 of which were made by schools) were received for early intervention support for children aged 5-16 years. Support included emotional health and wellbeing, domestic abuse, youth work support, support for children with disabilities or an additional learning need, Team

		<p>Around the Family. Support was also provided for parents where needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) made over 1800 contacts (including 560 house visits) during January – March 2021 to deliver devices, sanitary products, pencil cases, food parcels and books and be ‘someone’ to talk to about pupils’ concerns. • During the academic year 2020 - 2021, the EWOs met with safeguarding leads in school on a regular basis to identify and support the most vulnerable young people: 200 young people were identified from attendance reports who had not returned and contact was made to support families/the young people. • Two videos on non-attendance were made featuring celebrities and young people .These highlighted the importance of attendance for not only academic reasons but also for meeting friends at school, making new friends etc. to combat the social impact of COVID 19. • Resources have been developed including transition packs and social stories, to assist in alleviating anxieties and preparing children and young people for a successful return to school. • Referrals were made to the Legacy Counsellor for
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		<p>those young people who were suffering from anxiety due to the pandemic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our Wellbeing and Behaviour Service has continued to provide support around SEBD.• Our Youth Service Core Team provided one to one support to young people identified by their schools as needing additional support on a range of issues. The work helped young people with their anxieties and give them the opportunity to talk to a trusted adult.• Training was provided to all secondary schools and special school staff on supporting young people's emotional wellbeing in preparation for their return to school.• Our Educational Psychology Service has continued to offer regular supervision and training for Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) staff within schools.• Lesson plans were developed to help staff and pupils manage the return to schools following the initial lockdown. These plans were reflective resource to enable and support any concerns that children and young people wanted to discuss following the crisis. The feedback regarding these resources from schools was very positive.
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<p>Priority 1.2 All children of school age will have improved wellbeing and a greater sense of belonging</p>	<p>We will continue to work with pupils, parents/carers and schools to reduce the number of instances of non-attendance and exclusions in all our schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Wellbeing and Behaviour Service continued to work with children, young people, families, schools and other services to provide support for SEBD. This included working with pupils and staff on school site, carrying out garden visits to support families, multi-agency working and support for our SEBD provisions. Training was delivered to school staff on Working with Pupils with SEBD, Trauma Informed Approaches and Team Teach, all of which include practical tools for emotional regulation and de-escalation. • A trauma informed pastoral support plan has been developed and schools will be consulted on this in the autumn term 2021. • Cynnydd continued to work in schools to support the most vulnerable pupils. Recent feedback from Estyn said that ‘the service plays a key role in supporting vulnerable pupils to improve their behaviour, attainment and attendance’. • 91% of pupils who have left Cynnydd are at reduced risk of becoming NEET due to improved attendance, attainment and behaviour.
	<p>We will continue to work with parents/carers of pre-school children to ensure that they are</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flying Start and Families First parenting teams continue to work with families with pre-school children, to support good parenting and to help

	<p>prepared for school</p>	<p>parents support their child's healthy development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through WG's Child Development Fund, we have offered additional activities for children under five and their parents, aimed at supporting children impacted by COVID. Activities were delivered which supported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Speech, language and communication ○ Gross and fine motor skills ○ Social and emotional development ○ Early years nutrition <p>Additional funding has recently been confirmed for October 21-March 22 and plans are being discussed with partners to continue delivery of projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals for support services are received through our Early Intervention and Prevention Panel, which directs families to appropriate early intervention services. Services are able to support children and parents to address issues that may be impacting on ability to parent or on children's development, including domestic abuse and emotional and mental wellbeing. Approximately 25% of referrals received in 2020/21 were for families with a child under 5 years of age. • The Childcare Offer for Wales provides funded
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		<p>childcare to children aged 3 and 4 years with working parents. The scheme was suspended in April 2020 and the temporary Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme (CCAS) was introduced for vulnerable children and children of key workers. 824 children in NPT were approved for CCAS. The Childcare Offer was reinstated in September 2020, with 806 active users by end April 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Flying Start programmes continues to support families with early years' children in some of the counties most deprived areas. Throughout COVID, much of the programme was delivered remotely through Teams and Zoom, but children have continued to access their free childcare place. Approx. 1700 children under four were engaged with at least one element of the programme.• Support is provided to children with additional learning needs access childcare, supporting their development and their preparedness for school. Spaces are funded through Childcare Offer, Flying Start and O Gam I Gam, and the teams sit as part of the Early Years Multi-Agency Panel to co-ordinate support with partners.
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	<p>We will collect data from schools and support schools to address bullying and harassment in all its forms and work with them to address trends/issues</p>	<p>Pupil bullying incidents are recorded by schools using schools information management system. This information will be looked at to identify trends and support schools where there are numerous incidents. We are currently reviewing our anti-bullying guidance, which will support schools in addressing instances of bullying and harassment.</p>
	<p>We will work with schools and other relevant settings to support pupils who are victims of bullying and work with perpetrators of bullying</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cynnydd continue to work with young people who are both victims and perpetrators of bullying through 1-1 and group work sessions. Work with perpetrators focuses on understanding behaviour and why bullying occurs. • Restorative training for schools has been developed and will be rolled out in the autumn term. This will give schools even more tools to deal with bullying incidents. • Our Inclusion Service provides training and advice to schools to support the emotional wellbeing of all children and young people.
	<p>We will continue to work with schools and other relevant settings to ensure that their learning environments are safe and nurturing, where there is</p>	<p>A grant from Welsh Government has provided funding for all schools to have outdoor learning packs; the Wellbeing and Behaviour Service have enhanced this by including activities. The service are also offering outdoor learning training and consultations to develop forest school areas on school sites. One team member</p>

	<p>respect and due regard to equality, diversity and inclusion</p>	<p>has recently completed forest school level 3 training the trainer which will allow full forest school leader training to be provided to schools</p>
	<p>We will work with schools to explore the benefits of employing Family Liaison Officers or similar roles, including a cluster approach, out of delegated budgets in order to support pupils and parents to overcome challenges that impact negatively on learning and wellbeing.</p>	<p>Education Support Officers will be visiting schools to review the School Development plans (SDP) and the self-evaluation process. The support offered to pupils and parents will be a specific focus.</p> <p>e.g. Case study from Awel y Mor on effective use of a Family Engagement Officer will form part of the national guidance on effective use of the Pupil Development Grant.</p> <p>The Council is working strategically with The Child Poverty Action Group and the 'Cost of the School Day' project, which will support targeted schools to develop approaches to engaging with families to overcome barriers to learning.</p>
	<p>We will work in partnership with schools and local organisations to ensure our children and young people 'are knowledgeable about their culture, community, society and the world now and in the past and respect the needs and rights of others, as a member of</p>	<p>Education Support Officers collaborate with schools to develop the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales, which includes the need to develop learners as ethical and informed members of society and healthy, confident individuals.</p> <p>The local authority strategy for learning and teaching is a plan to develop learners' higher order thinking. Higher order thinking, particularly creative learning leads to wide-ranging benefits including improved</p>

	a diverse society'	wellbeing and better employability prospects.
	We will work with schools and local organisations to ensure teaching of the new curriculum reflects the multi-ethnic nature of Wales	<p>Education Support Officers collaborate with schools to develop the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales, which includes the need to develop learners as ethical and informed members of society and healthy, confident individuals.</p> <p>Specific integration work carried out by the Local Authority Vulnerable Learners Service supports schools to develop this culture through training and the sharing of a wide range of resources.</p>

Health and Wellbeing - to promote wellbeing and good mental health and tackle mental health stigma and discrimination

Priority	Action	Progress 2020-2021
<p>Priority 2.1 Our Staff will be supported and appropriate services promoted</p>	<p>As an employer we will raise awareness of mental health and support services</p>	<p>Awareness raising initiatives have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Health & Well-being website - this was launched on 9 April 2020 via a Gov Notify message from the Chief Executive. The website is accessible inside and outside the Council, via a range of digital devices, including personal smartphones. This resource was reviewed, refreshed and relaunched in May 2021. • Occupational Health (OH) Unit Helpline - this service is available Monday to Friday during office hours providing advice and signposting to employees. • Wellbeing Through Work - the Council has been able to access this mental health and wellbeing service which is provided to NHS employees. This service provides a wide range of support on both physical and mental health well-being including referral to specialist support services. This onward referral includes Trauma Support for those who encounter traumatic experiences. • Occupational Health (OH) Unit Referral Helpline - a referral service for managers to deal with critical OH matters.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Counselling Service Helpline for school based staff - providing signposting advice and guidance in relation to the mental health and wellbeing of teaching and learning support assistants, as well as providing advisory support and guidance on how teachers and learning support assistants can support young people deal with issues arising from Coronavirus. • Primary School Call Back Service for parents - this service provided by the School Based Counselling Service supports parents in supporting the emotional wellbeing of their children during this time. • Communications focus on wellbeing - mental health and wellbeing feature regularly in employee communications, including the Intranet, HR SWAY and In the Loop. • Time to Change Wales Employee Champions Network - 12 employees were recruited to be Employee Champions in the summer of 2021. The Champions were trained by Time to Change Wales and are instrumental in providing support for employees within their service areas in relation to mental health and wellbeing and are also the link to rolling out corporate health and wellbeing initiatives across the Council.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Mental Health Day 10 October 2020 - five days of activities to support mental health and wellbeing were arranged for week commencing 5 October 2020 in support of World Mental Health Day. These activities involved virtual Tai Chi, talks from Wellbeing Through Work in relation to home working, Mindfulness sessions and Wellbeing Workshops. All were very well attended. • Return to workplaces following COVID-19 lockdown - risk assessments and manager guidance refer to the emotional well-being impact of the return to workplaces, as well as the physical arrangements that are necessary.
	<p>As an employer we will update and implement policies to address mental health in the workplace</p>	<p>We have developed robust policies to support the health and wellbeing of employees, including the Maximising Attendance at Work policy, and the Rehabilitation Scheme. In addition to this, guidance was issued to accountable managers in 2020, to support them to implement reasonable adjustments to enable employees with disabilities to sustain employment. The review of the Performance Appraisal Policy, the Corporate Supervision template and the Induction 'checklist' has taken account of the Council's commitment to the Time to Change Wales Employer Pledge, providing a focus on supporting employee well-being and mental health as a key part of the</p>

		<p>performance management discussion.</p> <p>The council is accredited as a Disability Confident Employer, achieving Level 2, with accreditation in place until August 2022. By continuing our Disability Confident journey, the Council is ensuring that disabled people and those with long-term health conditions have the opportunities to fulfil their potential and realise their aspirations.</p>
	We will provide information to employees about mental health and signpost to support services	Please see information above.
	We will continue to implement our Time to Change Wales Employer Pledge Action Plan	The Council has determined that its strategy will be delivered via the Time to Change Wales Employer Pledge Scheme. An action plan was developed in partnership with trade unions and endorsed at the highest level of the organisation. It was formally launched in partnership with Time to Change Wales at Staff Council in September 2019, and the Action Plan presented to and monitored on a regular basis by Personnel Committee.
	We will provide training and resources for staff to help raise awareness of mental health issues and help reduce the	<p>A range of training initiatives has been offered by the Learning, Training and Development (LT&D) Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online First Aid for Mental Health course - prior to the COVID-19 emergency we had started to roll out this certificated course, provided face to face by

	<p>stigma associated with mental health</p>	<p>Neath College to group of around 20 at a time. The LT&D team have worked with Neath College to develop this into an online webinar, which is also certificated. This has now been completed by 77 employees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindfulness Course -38 employees completed a five week online course offered in partnership with UNISON and funded by the Wales Union Learning Fund • The Wellbeing Series - five online webinars designed to help participants optimise their wellbeing, was provided initially to our Corporate Management Group, to support the mental health and wellbeing of the senior team. The series was so successful it has been rolled out across social services, to head teachers and to the Test Trace Protect Service.
<p>Priority 2.2 Our Children and young people can access appropriate support</p>	<p>We will redesign our systems relating to Emotional, Mental Health Wellbeing support to provide a simpler integrated access to services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work has been undertaken to map the emotional and mental health support for schools. This will be aligned to new Inclusion Service processes for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reform to ensure a clear pathway. • Meetings are planned with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Barnardo's to develop ways their service delivery aligns with this

		<p>pathway.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five schools have been identified as pilots for Welsh Governments Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Well-being. This is being led by the implementation lead in public health who will work closely with officers within education. • Youth Mental Health First Aid Training has been delivered to ensure every secondary school and special school has staff trained up as Mental Health First Aiders
<p>Priority 2.3 Our Communities that need support will be able to access appropriate services</p>	<p>We will honour our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, ensuring that no veteran, or family member of serving personnel or a veteran, is disadvantaged by their service, when accessing health and wellbeing support and services</p>	<p>Since the start of the pandemic in late March 2020, a weekly and sometimes daily, 'Update' briefing was sent to all stakeholders in the South West Wales Armed Forces Covenant area.</p> <p>The briefings were used to raise awareness of local policies and available support to those who were experiencing certain difficulties during the lockdown, such as mental health support, combating domestic abuse, and employment support.</p> <p>The 'Update' was disseminated widely across Wales by recipients to their networks and stakeholders, including many families in our community whose loved ones were either in the regular forces, or the reserves, who were mobilised to fight the cause on the home front.</p>

	<p>We will contribute to the Public Services Board’s work to reduce suicide rates in the county borough</p>	<p>We have established a Suicide Rapid Response Group (SRRG), which is activated at any suspected suicide (Adult), or unexpected death (Child). The aim of this Group is to reduce risk and harm to those remaining and prevent other suicides. The protocol is currently being revised to include significant attempted suicide and sudden death under 21.</p> <p>A suite of data is reported to the Safeguarding Board on a quarterly basis to track any themes and patterns that may be emerging from this cohort of individuals in a bid to prevent future suicides. We are currently looking at a suite of data following attempted suicides.</p> <p>Suicide rates will also be considered as part of the next iteration of our Wellbeing Assessment, which is currently in development and is due to be published in May 2022.</p>
	<p>We will provide information to the public about mental health and signpost to support services from our website</p>	<p>The council signposts people from its website to DEWIS (an online directory that contains information on over 6,000 local and national organisations or services that can help people with their wellbeing).</p>
	<p>We will work with Public Health Wales and Swansea Bay University Local Health Board to</p>	<p>We continue to work closely with Public Health Wales and Swansea Bay University Local Health Board with the development of Wellbeing support tools accessible for staff affected by COVID-19.</p>

	<p>help address the impact of COVID-19 on health and social care staff</p>	
	<p>We will work within the regional NHS Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) Service to engage all people, including those with protected characteristics in the health protection programme and we will also ensure that all people who need to access the TTP service can do so, ensuring access caters for all</p>	<p>During January-March 2021 there were 2,582 Index Cases (Positive Cases) contacted with 2,047 Cases Eligible for Follow up, of which 2,040 Cases (99.6%) were successfully followed up by the Test, Trace and Protect Service (Neath Port Talbot).</p> <p>There were a total of 5,708 Contact Exposures (Contacts) with 4,847 Contacts Eligible for Follow up, of which 4,461 Cases (92%) were successfully followed up by the Test, Trace and Protect Service (Neath Port Talbot).</p> <p>Successful follow-ups were well above the service's performance target as set by Welsh Government (80%).</p>

Personal Safety - to ensure people and communities are safe, respected and free from violence and abuse

Priority	Action	Progress 2020-2021
<p>Priority 3.1 People feel safe in their</p>	<p>We will increase the reports of</p>	<p>Throughout the pandemic the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence</p>

homes	<p>Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Neath Port Talbot, through awareness raising and challenging attitudes</p>	<p>(VAWDASV) Communications and Engagement Sub Group, continued to promote all available support services and helplines, via social media posts, banners in areas of high footfall and leaflets in key locations across the borough.</p> <p>Reports of VAWDASV increased by 40% through the pandemic.</p> <p>Community Safety engagement events, unable to go ahead during this period, will resume during 2021-2022 as soon as restrictions allow.</p> <p>The revised 'Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy' - the council and health board joint response to the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 was approved by Cabinet in June 2020.</p>
	<p>We will increase awareness in children and young people of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong</p>	<p>The delivery of age appropriate healthy relationship lessons into schools resumed during the period, following a pause due to the COVID-19 restrictions.</p> <p>The Relationship and Sexuality Education Sub Group has overall responsibility for the development and implementation of this lesson. This group is coordinated by the Community Safety Team and chaired by the Senior Youth and Community Officer in the Neath Port Talbot Youth Service. Young people accessing Youth Services also have the opportunity to receive information and advice on all forms of domestic</p>

		<p>abuse.</p> <p>The 2020 and 2021 Crucial Crew events, which include a Healthy Relationships workshop, for Year 6 pupils have not taken place due to the pandemic. However, a virtual Crucial Crew film has been developed and uploaded onto the Hwb network for use by schools.</p> <p>We are hopeful that the face-to-face event can be held during 2022.</p>
	<p>Provide all victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs led, strength based, gender responsive services across Neath Port Talbot</p>	<p>Work continues on a commissioning review of all specialist support services across the borough, to ensure we are meeting people's needs and able to offer a wide variety of supported accommodation, emergency accommodation and community based support, for all those who need it. Work also continues on ensuring we have accessible appropriate service for marginalised groups in our communities.</p> <p>Existing services are regularly promoted and reviewed.</p>
<p>Priority 3.2 People feel safe in the community</p>	<p>We will work with members of local equality groups, partners and our communities to encourage the reporting of hate incidents/crime and ensure people get support which is fit for purpose</p>	<p>Community Safety employ a Community Cohesion Officer, who works as part of a wider regional team across Swansea and Bridgend. The post holder also provides two days of support to our local BME Community Association. Both aspects of the role work well to ensure we are regularly promoting appropriate services, and encouraging reporting of incidents or matters of concern through to the right channels.</p> <p>Anecdotal information from engagement events and</p>

		consultations is also used to steer future campaigns and initiatives.
	We will support the use of the BME Community Association Access Card (to help breakdown language barriers when accessing service)	Progress was suspended with the outbreak of the pandemic but it is anticipated that this will be progressed during autumn 2021.
	We will support the BME Community Association to build on the work already undertaken in the Community Profiling exercise as well as to extend its scope	Work to consider appropriate mechanisms to progress this action was suspended during 2020-2021. However, this work will resume during 2021-2022.
	We will develop an action plan in response to the feedback from the Community Cohesion Survey	<p>While some of the feedback from the Brexit Survey (misquoted in the action) remains valid the environment in which that was undertaken has changed dramatically with the outbreak of the pandemic, the BLM movement and other events over the last year.</p> <p>The findings of the Let's Talk survey, currently underway, will identify what is important for people currently and in the future and it is likely many of the actions to meet the equality objectives, and in particular this action, will require amendment/revision.</p>

	<p>We will continue to work with the BME Community Association to further understand the lived experiences of members of our BAME communities, particularly in relation of their experiences of hate incidents/crimes</p>	<p>The BME Community Association as part of the engagement activity undertaken to help inform the Welsh Government's REAP recorded an insight into the lived experiences of members of our BME communities. With the support and assistance of our Vulnerable Learners Service and our Community Cohesion Officer and Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator the Association has been able to help identify issues in partnership which we are/can address.</p> <p>This work will also inform our recovery planning due to commence in autumn 2021.</p>
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Employment - to ensure our workforce is more reflective of our community, our policies are fair and equitable and gender pay gaps are reduced

Priority	Action	Progress 2020-2021
<p>Priority 4.1 Our workforce reflects our diverse communities and is supported by our policies</p>	<p>We will ensure a fair and transparent recruitment and selection process that encourages a wider talent pool and facilitates a more equal gender balance</p>	<p>We continue to offer courses for recruiting managers with courses moving online during 2020-2021; 11 managers attended Recruitment and Selection courses.</p> <p>In September 2021, when we move to our new HR/Payroll database, iTrent, we will pilot anonymised application forms in certain areas in order to facilitate</p>

		this.
	We will promote, facilitate, analyse and monitor flexibility in the workplace at all levels, to enable women to progress and to ensure compatibility with a multi-generational workforce	<p>Awareness raising and communication on the council's flexible working policies/shared parental leave policy and their benefits undertaken at Directorate Senior Management Meetings are cascaded across all service areas.</p> <p>Promotion of our flexible working options has been undertaken and is ongoing via our internal communication mechanisms such as 'In the Loop' and the weekly Sway publication.</p>
	We will collect and monitor data in more depth related to flexible working	<p>Collection and monitoring of data had commenced but due to the pandemic and given that a large number of employees have been working from home, there has been a reduction in requests for flexible working during this period.</p> <p>However, as the situation improves and with working arrangements unlikely to return to pre pandemic conditions we will review our policies as part of our recovery planning work.</p>
	We will scrutinise the Shared Parental Leave uptake to monitor gender balance and encourage uptake across genders	<p>During 2019-2020, 181 employees took maternity/paternity/adoption leave but no employee took shared parental leave.</p> <p>However, we will continue to monitor the take up of shared parental leave, with the new HR system and the implementation of associated processes will improve</p>

		our ability to effectively scrutinise this and other policies.
	We will, in the spirit of the Armed Forces Covenant, include a guaranteed interview scheme for recently discharged members of the Armed Forces.	This has been implemented in our recruitment process, but only for our paper application form and information provided on the NPT jobs pages, as we are unable to change the online application form. In September 2021, this will be fully implemented when we move to our new HR/ Payroll Database – iTrent.
	We will consider how our policies and practices impact on our staff who are employed on casual and temporary contracts and part time contracts.	A review of all HR policies and practices to ensure equality of application to staff on casual temporary and part time contracts as part of the Council's recovery work is to commence in autumn 2021.
	We will develop a BAME Equality and Diversity Action Plan, developing a set of evidenced based actions with the aim of improving equality and diversity amongst the Council's workforce	Following the Black Lives Matter – a Conversation held with staff and trade union representatives in September 2020 we developed an action plan to address the issues raised. While a number of issues raised have been progressed, engagement with young people to help inform Welsh Government's REAP took place in December 2020, others will require a longer period of time to progress as they require ongoing engagement, work to bring about a culture change and the

		introduction of the new education curriculum.
	We will work to improve our Corporate Culture, to ensure each member of staff is valued and respected	Work in relation to revised corporate values, behaviours and culture commenced in June 2021.
	We will work with staff to determine the appetite to form a BAME Employee Forum to help ensure voices are heard	We continue to work with Unison's Chair of Black Member's for Wales to facilitate a BME Employee Forum/Network. Agreement has been reached for him to use Unison facilities time to help plan and facilitate an initial forum meeting in the autumn 2021 with attendees at the Black Lives Matter – a Conversation, held in September 2020.
	We will offer opportunities to young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) to help them gain experience and skills in order to enter the world of employment	<p>Although work has been affected by the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns the Youth Service Keeping in Touch (KIT) and Cam Nesa Teams have continued to support NEET young people aged 16-24 to help them make an effective transition to a positive employment, education or training destination.</p> <p>During January to March 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200 young people supported, 69 females and 131 males, with 936 contacts. • 19 young moved into employment; • 3 young people entered Work Based Learning; • 15 young people moved into a more appropriate tier;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 71 young people gained a successful outcome; • 49 young people gained a qualification; • 17 young people were referred to specialist provision for support <p>Targeted support along with tailor made action plans are devised for individuals, which may provide formal qualifications such as CSCS, CCNSG, Food Hygiene and a variety of other courses. The provision also offers the participants help and advice with job search activities, CV creation and interview techniques. Youth workers also provide wellbeing, emotional and life skills activities, which help the participants to achieve their goals.</p> <p>In addition the team work closely with a range of partners and specific work during this period has included promoting Kickstart opportunities, promoting local labour market opportunities, delivering virtual employability support, CV writing, cover letters, mock interviews, promoting and funding new online learning and training courses such as, Flexi B online training and virtual college courses. Youth Workers also delivered COVID awareness courses to young people which enhanced their CVs.</p> <p>Skills and Training continue to provide remote and on-line learning to all our learners on Traineeships and Apprenticeships who are on our Work Based Learning</p>
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		<p>provision. Progress reviews are heightened to ensure regular contact is made from staff to all learners. New learners who have signed on throughout this period who do not have access to any digital equipment are provided with equipment to ensure their online teaching and support commences.</p> <p>Communities for Work Plus continues to provide remote provision via phone calls, FaceTime, Whatsapp, e mails, Teams, Zoom to those who are 16+ and not eligible for ESF Employability provision</p>
	<p>We will revisit staff training on equalities, particular re-visiting people's understanding of disability, including non-visible disabilities</p>	<p>We continue to support staff by offering a range of both general and specific equalities courses, including equalities in the workplace; unconscious bias; autism spectrum disorder; working with people with memory loss; transgender issues in the workplace; providing Muslim friendly workplaces; identifying accessibility needs and hate crime.</p>
<p>Priority 4.2 Our Gender Pay Gaps are reduced</p>	<p>We will implement the Fair Play Employer Scheme Gender Diversity Action Plan</p>	<p>We continue to implement the action plan, with the assistance of Chwarae Teg, with progress and actions reviewed on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>We implemented online career development sessions for lower paid women, aimed at increasing skills and confidence. 83 staff completed the sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Smarter Not Harder • How to say no brilliantly

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak Up, Stand Out • Change your thinking, get results • Managing challenging behaviour
	We will address the gender pay gap within the Council by implementing the Fair Play Employers Action Plan	<p>Since implementing the Fair Play Employers Action Plan, we have seen an improvement in our gender pay gap.</p> <p>The Council workforce, excluding schools, was 3,630 employees, at 31 March 2020, with 1290 (35.5%) male and 2340 (64.5%) female employees.</p> <p>Our median (the midpoint in the ranges of hourly rates of men and women) gender pay gap (excluding schools) had reduced to 3.44 % from 3.93% in 2019, while the mean (the difference in the average hourly rate) gender pay gap (excluding schools) was 7.2% in 2020 compared to 9.15% in 2019.</p> <p>More detail can be found in the Gender Pay Gap Report 2020</p>

Participation - to ensure services are accessible for all and people and communities are able to better influence decisions that affect them

Priority	Action	Progress 2020-2021
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Priority 5.1 Our services, digital and traditional, are accessible to all	We will continuously review and update our website to improve its accessibility	We are introducing components and patterns from the GOV.UK Design System into NPT.GOV.UK as part of our continuous improvement of the website. This work will improve its accessibility so as many people as possible are be able to use it.
	We will work to address the barriers people and organisations face to participate on-line	We have begun to conduct user research with residents as part of our user centred design work with the Centre for Digital Public Services Wales to understand what people need from us to participate online and the findings will inform our work going forward.
	We will work to identify the opportunities across the County Borough for citizens to improve their digital skills and understanding	<p>Our Digital Ambassador has kept in touch with community organisations and partners throughout the pandemic, updating them on training opportunities, providing advice and support amongst other activities.</p> <p>Cyber safety, always important but never more so during the pandemic with an increase on the reliance of digital services, has been a key feature of our work. A digital safety and how to keep safe avoiding scams and online fraud presentation was produced by the Digital Ambassador during the pandemic. Sessions were delivered via Teams and Zoom with sessions planned for delivery in the coming months as community centres begin to open up.</p> <p>As part of our Smart and Connected Strategy, 31 Digital Partners have undergone training during February and March 2021 in order to help and support those who may</p>

		be digitally excluded due to accessibility issues as well as supporting colleagues with new systems and procedures.
	We will work through the Community Safety Partnership and the Safeguarding Board to prevent Cybercrime and protect people against exploitation	<p>Cyber Crime and Scams remains a priority to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) for 2021-2022 and is a standing agenda item at all board meetings as well as on the Operational Tasking Group, which focuses on frontline work, campaigns and initiatives. This work is supported by our Digital Inclusion Ambassador and Trading Standards Team.</p> <p>Now that engagement events have resumed, restrictions permitting, we can engage with our residents on all community safety related topics including Cyber Crime, Scams and Loan Sharks.</p> <p>Whilst we have not been able to physically engage with residents during the pandemic, we have heavily utilised our social media platforms and network of partners to ensure key messages are still shared with the public.</p>
	We will improve physical access to the committee facilities in both Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres	<p>As a consequence of lockdown measures, formal Council meetings and public access to civic buildings were suspended and with the majority of office based staff required to work from home the planned improvements have not been prioritised.</p> <p>However as we begin to focus on recovery, it will be necessary to reassess our civic buildings in light of new working arrangements as well as in response to the</p>

		requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 or other legislative requirements or guidance from Welsh or UK Government.
	We will ensure that the many services available to the Armed Forces Community are accessible on line, but also by telephone through the Veteran Gateway.	Although the pandemic halted physical events, we still held a multi-faceted 'Virtual Festival', followed by the 75th Anniversary of VJ and VE Day. These virtual events not only marked the events, but were an opportunity for Veterans and Families to access vital information and support via social media and the council's webpages.
	We will work with local businesses and organisations to explore alternative arrangements in accessing retail services for those experiencing difficulties due to limited digital access etc.	Work has commenced on proposals to establish an Economic Recovery Fund to help businesses become more resilient and innovative as they adapt (digitally) to new ways of working post COVID-19.
	We will continue to support the key principles as contained in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021: including programmes to support disabled candidates	In order to support the Council's Diversity in Democracy resolution (agreed at Council in May 2021), an action plan is presently being considered by the Council's Democratic Services Committee, with a report being commended to Full Council in autumn 2021. This report sets out the principles that the Council will undertake to ensure a diverse democratic process. Further implementation will also take place to ensure new voting

	standing at elections, and the production of a public participation strategy	process (i.e. 16 and 17 year olds being able to vote) are in place prior to any future elections. A public participation strategy will be required to be in place following the May 2022 elections and officers will bring processing this. In autumn 2021 reports will be brought forward on public speaking at Council meetings, the development of an e-petition scheme and the development of hybrid meetings.
Priority 5.2 Our communities will enjoy increased social and community cohesion	We will support local groups, including the BME Community Association, to develop community activities and events	With the restrictions imposed as a consequence of the pandemic, local community activities have been limited. However, our Community Cohesion Officer has supported a number of events and meetings with community groups via Teams/Zoom. It is anticipated activities, those postponed from 2020-2021 as well as new activities, will go ahead in 2021-2022.
	We will further develop our links with our faith communities	A number of our various religious communities are currently represented on our Equality and Community Cohesion Group providing valuable insight and contribution to our work in this area. However, we are mindful that our links remain limited and while work to progress this further has been delayed; we will begin to identify opportunities to progress this action during 2021-2022.
	We will provide information and	Staff are able to access, via the Intranet, online Welsh Taster courses that can completed at their own pace. In

	<p>a signposting service for those who wish to learn English and/or Welsh</p>	<p>addition, a range of other online Welsh courses have been made available to staff including Entry Level, Foundation Level, Intermediate and Confidence Building courses.</p> <p>Discussions are underway internally and with partners to identify the most effective approach for signposting for language courses, mental health, and resources available within Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Bay.</p>
	<p>We will develop/strengthen policies to respond to an aging population and support the formation of a new group to address this</p>	<p>Progress on this action was delayed due to the pandemic but will be progressed as part of the Councils recovery planning work.</p>
	<p>We will work with members of the Trans community to help raise awareness</p>	<p>Progress on this action has been marred by the outbreak of the pandemic and necessary counter measures put in place to restrict the spread of the virus.</p> <p>As measures are now being lifted, work to progress this action will commence during 2021-2022.</p>
	<p>We will develop a rights based approach to our work, with a focus on children's rights working with Youth Mayor, Youth Council amongst others</p>	<p>Schools have been supported to embed a rights based approach. Before the pandemic, 45 schools signed up to the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award, this included all our secondary schools and special schools, with three schools achieving the gold award.</p> <p>Our education Participation Strategy was paused due to the pandemic. It is currently being reviewed in line with</p>

		<p>the new guidance on embedding a whole school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing, along with the new curriculum and ALN reform, which all have children’s rights as central.</p> <p>Our Youth Council works to increase and embed young people’s participation and children’s rights, within communities as well as in local, regional and national decision-making structures. A new Youth Mayor & Deputy Youth Mayor, elected by the Youth Council, were inaugurated at a virtual ceremony on 10 December 2020. The Youth Mayor has pledged to champion the rights of children and young people</p>
	<p>We will establish engagement mechanisms, for example a new Citizens’ Panel, and use responses to ensure that the Council’s policy making and service development is informed by what matters to people</p>	<p>We have a dedicated consultations area on the Council’s website, and a NPT Citizens' Panel which was launched in January 2020. The Panel is open to residents and membership is compared with census information for the county borough, to ensure it represents the diverse population of Neath Port Talbot. The Citizens’ Panel will not replace formal consultations, but will complement them and provide another way for the people of Neath Port Talbot to have their voices heard and to get involved in decision making in Neath Port Talbot.</p>
	<p>We will work with organisations that support the Armed Forces Community to help reduce</p>	<p>During the pandemic, many of the organisations that work to reduce loneliness and isolation suspended their services or moved to virtual support.</p>

	<p>isolation and loneliness, which is felt by many when they leave the services or by a member of the family when the serving family member is deployed on active service or training</p>	<p>Therefore continued engagement with organisations that support service personnel and their families has been via virtual meetings including: RAF Families Federation, Housing Justice, RM Carers, RAF Benevolent Fund, Crimestoppers, Bridgend Advice Bureau, Bridgend Carers, DWP, Swansea Bay University Health Board to name a few.</p>
	<p>We will implement the action plan in support of the Digital Charter Award for which we have recently been recognised</p>	<p>A Digital Partners network was launched for staff to help staff gain digital confidence and overcome any barriers to getting digitally active in both the workplace and their personal lives. Training programme delivered by Digital Communities Wales (DCW)</p>
	<p>We will work in partnership with relevant groups to address our shared history and explore ways to better express this within our communities</p>	<p>Over many years we have been mindful of and joined our communities to celebrate aspects of shared history and influential individuals, groups and events, for example Black History Month and LGBT History Month. Jointly celebrating our diverse cultures with events such as Mother Language Day has shown how such visible expression ‘...made me laugh...made me cry, but most of all the event made me understand’. This understanding is something we want to build on. The New Curriculum for schools will provide opportunities for more learning and greater understanding not only of our local history, for example the lives and experiences of members of the Jamaican</p>

		<p>community during the 1950s and 1960s, but also a more balanced understanding and acknowledgement of historical periods and events that have contributed to and shaped our lives. Discussion have already begun between our education service and the BME Community Association on how communities can help support the delivery of the new curriculum.</p>
	<p>We will support local small businesses in implementing the ever changing requirements of the Welsh Government's guidelines in response to the COVID-19 outbreak</p>	<p>During January-March 2021, we made 264 proactive visits to businesses to check compliance with COVID-19 measures and 235 visits as a result of complaints from the public. 48 advisory letters were issued although no fixed penalty fines were issued.</p> <p>Although generally welcomed by businesses, some have viewed these visits as burdensome.</p> <p>Our approach has been more advisory and where necessary issuing 'advisory' letters rather than straight to enforcement to help those businesses cope under the immense pressure.</p> <p>A question and answer session with various hospitality businesses was held in August 2020 to help in negotiating new legislative requirements. The session was very successful providing not only welcome information but also an opportunity to help build relationships and trust; demonstrating that we are not just as an enforcement body but one which advises and support businesses.</p>

		We will continue to adjust our working practices in line with Welsh Government advice/ new legislation.
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Living standards - to work to reduce poverty and support independent living

Priority	Action	Progress 2020-2021
Priority 6.1 People and communities will benefit from interventions to alleviate poverty	We will develop an action plan to address the issues for those with low net disposable income.	<p>The action plan was in the early stages of development during this period. However, work had taken place throughout the year to address issues faced by those with low net disposable income.</p> <p>For example, we awarded the remaining EU transition funding we had received from the Welsh Government to a number of local organisations supporting those facing food poverty. The money was used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • buy a cooker for a community kitchen • buy laptops and tablets for volunteers so they can support vulnerable residents to shop online • Food hampers for those moving on from the night shelter • A regional (Swansea Bay) Pension Credit campaign was launched to ensure those eligible for Pension

		Credit support were accessing the funding.
	We will embrace the new socio economic duty	We have amended our Integrated Impact Assessment framework to include the requirements of the socio economic duty , which commenced in April 2021. Awareness training was provided to all Senior Management Teams and Members to help ensure we address and fulfil the requirement of the duty for all strategic decisions.
	We will ensure those families entitled to free school meals continue to receive support throughout the school holidays in line with Welsh Government guidelines.	<p>£1,197,850 was paid to eligible parents during January – March 2021 with £3.9 million in payments since the first lockdown (up to 31.03.21).</p> <p>Free school meal (FSM) payments have been and will continue to be paid throughout school holidays.</p> <p>Food parcels were provided for FSM pupils to those families who were not able to receive direct payments.</p> <p>As at 31 March 2021 there were 5747 pupils entitled to free school meals (FSM); of these, 5178 were FSM eligible and 569 were FSM protected</p> <p>FSM protected pupils are those who have lost their FSM eligibility since April 2019 but remain eligible even though their families may now have an income exceeding that eligible for a free meal if they were applying for the first time now. FSM protection ceases in December 2023 although pupils will be protected until they complete the education phase they are in at that</p>

		time.
	We will work with local organisations and local businesses to explore how to maintain access to appropriate cultural foods during periods of restricted movement/lockdown going forward.	We continue to promote the Council's Buy Local campaign aimed at linking shoppers to businesses and business to business activity to support local traders and maintain the supply of goods during restricted periods.
Priority 6.2 People will benefit from programmes and support to live as independently as possible	We will support the Regional Partnership Board to develop and continue to provide a sustainable range of services that meet demand, enabling individuals to remain at home maintaining their independence for as long as possible receiving appropriate support at times of need	We continue to engage with the Regional Partnership Board on development and implementation of the Discharge to Recover and Assess Model, in order to support people to receive the right care in the right place in order to enable them to remain independent at home for as long as possible.
	We will continue to help people to learn and interact with others so they can be part of their communities	The implementation of existing and future pieces of work to realise the equality objectives, along with the implementation of the anticipated Race Equality Action Plan and other relevant activities will all contribute to ensuring our communities will be more cohesive.

	<p>We will help support people to live as independent a life as possible</p>	<p>Our Reablement Service continues to support people to remain as independent as possible within their own homes via a programme of assessment and therapy at home, virtual ward support and at hospital discharge.</p> <p>Opportunities for the use of Technology Enhanced Care, (TEC) with regards to falls prevention, and mental health wellbeing triage are being looked at for inclusion in project plans for delivery later in the year – ARMED falls prevention and CANTAB triage.</p> <p>Further TEC opportunities are being considered for the development of an independent living hub to support young people with learning disabilities to transition into independent living where possible.</p>
	<p>We will consider the continuation of the Safe and Well scheme to help support vulnerable members of our communities</p>	<p>NPT Safe and Well Service was established to respond to the governments’ request that councils mobilise humanitarian assistance for those who were told to shield as well as those told to strictly observe social distancing measures and to limit their contact with other people.</p> <p>While the Safe and Well service remains operational and accessible to vulnerable members of our communities the number of referrals being received has fallen considerably.</p>
	<p>We will improve communications with our</p>	<p>2020-2021 has seen considerable limitations on our ‘normal’ lives with lockdowns and firebreaks as well as</p>

	<p>vulnerable groups through a wide range of formats to better inform and support them to live as full a life as possible during the current coronavirus outbreak</p>	<p>the daily restrictions faced by us all.</p> <p>Key to our work throughout the period has been our communications team; providing a 7 days/week service across a range of existing and new channels of communication with new and existing techniques to engage with our residents. The team ensured that public health messages were aggressively promoted across all channels owned/commissioned by the Council; and accurate and timely information was provided about changes to service delivery and the establishment of new services, such as the Safe and Well Service, to support vulnerable people with daily tasks.</p> <p>The Service along with local community groups, local members and volunteers was a lifeline for many. The Buy Local Scheme helped sustain local businesses and also enabled residents, including our most vulnerable, to access necessary provisions.</p> <p>Changes to working practices and service delivery have been a major feature throughout the period, however, we have continued to provide essential services where necessary.</p> <p>The limited face-to-face interaction with more reliance on digital services has been an issue for many, particularly the vulnerable members of our communities. We have been mindful of this and our Digital Ambassador and service areas have worked to ensure</p>
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Priority 6.3 Transport links are maintained or enhanced	We will support community transport initiatives	<p>The pandemic caused continuing issues for the community transport organisations not least the restrictions on the number of passengers that can be carried at any one time (in line with Welsh Government Guidance).</p> <p>Community transport schemes have continued to receive Bus Service Support Grant funding at the same level as they did prior to the Pandemic.</p>
	We will lead the regional transport work with the Swansea Bay City Deal	<p>Since this action was agreed the City and County of Swansea has been nominated as the Lead on the Regional Bus Emergency Scheme BES2 for the administration of concessionary fare payments and will work closely with regional partners and bus operators. The South West Wales Regional Transport Forum are working with Welsh Government and Transport for Wales on the development of a strategic bus network. As part of the Corporate Joint Committee arrangements it is proposed a formal subcommittee is constituted to deliver the strategic regional transport arrangements reporting to the Corporate Joint Committee.</p>

