Strategic Equality Plan
2024-28

Foreword

I am pleased to introduce Cyngor Gwynedd's Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-28.

This Plan includes five Equality Objectives, namely the specific work Cyngor Gwynedd will do to improve fairness within our organisation. These objectives touch on all fields within the Council as we include matters such as staff training on how to ensure fairness for the people who use our services. We will also be looking at how easy it is for people to utilise our services and work to reduce any problems. Indeed, the main aim of this Plan is to improve our services, to ensure that they are suitable for everyone using them.

We also aim to work to become an employer that leads in the equal opportunity field, to ensure that we recruit and retain the best staff for their jobs.

To create the Objectives that are in this Equality Plan, thorough work has been done to ensure that we heard, and listened to, the public's opinions. This particularly included groups who have life experience of living with equality characteristics and are aware of obstacles that arise. It was possible for us to improve our objectives as a result of the information we have received, and I would like to thank everyone who gave their time to share their opinions with us.

M M Trenholme

Menna Trenholme
Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Equality



Introduction

What is the Strategic Equality Plan?

Cyngor Gwynedd is very keen to ensure that equality is deeply rooted within the Council's work so as to improve our services for all the people of Gwynedd. The purpose of the Strategic Equality Plan (the Plan) is to give us a framework to improve fairness within the Council and ensure that we treat people according to their needs. Equality is the term used in the act (see below), but it would also be possible to use the word equity too. This definition of equality means acknowledging that every individual has different needs and that we should share the exact resources and opportunities that they need to reach an equal outcome.

An important part of this Equality Plan are the Equality Objectives. We have been asking for the public's views over the course of a few months, including diverse groups and individuals, to see what are the best objectives we can fulfil for the people of Gwynedd. These Objectives are based on what we have been told, but also on several other factors. These include data from various sources, Welsh Government's action plans and what is possible within the Council.

Is there another reason to provide the Strategic Equality Plan?

The Plan ensures that we fulfil our duty under the Equality Act 2010 (the Act). The aim of the Act is to reduce inequalities by asking public bodies to give due attention to the three aims of the public sector equality duty, namely:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The act protects people who have one or more of these characteristics (protected characteristics):

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Sex
- Race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality
- Disability
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion or belief – including a lack of belief
- Marriage and civil partnership

The Plan is one of the expectations under the specific duty of the Act as it is implemented in Wales. We are also expected to report on our progress annually.

The Equality Act 2010 has also included the Socio-economic Duty since 2021. The expectation is for public bodies to take socio-economic disadvantage into account when making strategic decisions. There is more about this in this document, and also in the Equality Impact Assessment accompanying it.

Who is the Strategic Equality Plan aimed at?

The Plan, and the Act, are important to everyone. From talking to people over the past few months we have seen that some people have not understood that the Act protects everyone. They think that it is something for other people. But the act protects everyone because everyone has protected characteristics.

Of course, people with certain characteristics experience more barriers than others and therefore require greater consideration when developing the Plan and in the Council's work in general. Also, people with more than one of these characteristics are affected even more(intersectionality) e.g. a disabled young person.

What sort of county is Gwynedd?

Gwynedd is a county in North Wales. Gwynedd is the second largest county in Wales after Powys but it is in the lower half in terms of population. The three largest population centres in Gwynedd (Bangor, Caernarfon and Bethesda) are in the north-west of the county, therefore the rest of the area is rural. This is a factor that must be considered when providing services.

Recently, our Data and Information Service has produced a data document titled "Equality in North Wales: A Data and Evidence Document" on the six counties in North Wales (Gwynedd, Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham) and it notes many interesting factors about the Gwynedd population.

Over 51% of the people of Gwynedd are women.

There are more individuals under 25 in Gwynedd than any other county in the north (28.7%). The number of people over 65 is slightly lower than the North Wales average, but the percentage of people in this age group is increasing, with an 8.6% increase between the 2011 and 2021 censuses, whilst the population in general has fallen (in contrast with most of Wales).

Fewer people in Gwynedd identify as White (96.2%) than the rest of the counties in the north, except for Wrexham (96%). 66.6% noted that they were born in Wales (this is higher than the other counties except for Wrexham, and similar to Anglesey). 59% note that they identify as a Welsh person, which is several percentage points higher than the rest of the counties.

46.2% of the people of Gwynedd identify themselves as Christian, which is the lowest percentage in North Wales. 44.2% noted that they did not have a religion, the highest percentage in the north. The percentage that did not reply was also the highest in the region, at 7.5%. 1% of the population are Muslims.

Fewer people in Gwynedd identify as heterosexual or straight than any other county in the North (87.3% - the average for the north was 89.4%). There were more people identifying as Bisexual (1.6% – the percentage for the north was 1%) or who chose not to answer the question (9.4%) than in any other county in the region. The number who identified themselves as Gay or Lesbian was similar to the percentage for the north (1.3%).

Almost 1 person in every 5 (19%) identify as a disabled person and there is almost 10% more disabled women than men. 74% of Gwynedd people who

are not disabled are in employment compared with 43% of disabled people, comparable to the rest of Wales.

91.7% of the people of Gwynedd say that their gender identity is the same as the gender they were assigned at birth. This is less than any other county in North Wales (the average for the north is 92.8%). A higher proportion chose not to answer the question (8% - the north Wales percentage was 6.9%), and the proportion who identify as a trans man, trans woman and every other gender is the same as for the north (0.1% each).

There is a higher percentage of people in Gwynedd who have never married or been in a civil partnership (40%) than the rest of the counties in the north. Therefore, there are fewer people who are married (41.5%), separated (1.7%) or divorced or have dissolved a civil partnership (9.2%).

There were 977 live births in Gwynedd in 2022, down from 1039 in 2021.

64.5% of the people of Gwynedd (three-year-old or above) say that they speak Welsh, which is 73,600. This is the highest in Wales in terms of number and percentage.

13% of people were living in a household in material deprivation in 2021/22, while the figure in Wales was also 13%.

Our Equality Objectives

As a Council we are required to revise our objectives every four years. We recognise that equality work is a long-term undertaking, therefore we are building on the work of the 2020-24 Plan. Our task was to consider our objectives for 2020-24 and the progress we have made on them in order to create objectives for 2024-28, which will be another step on the journey.

We have also conducted an exercise to gather people's opinions over a number of months to ensure that we capture the views of the people of Gwynedd. There is more on this in the Analysis of the Engagement[1] and Analysis of the Consultation documents.

Furthermore, we have used data to determine what needs to be done. The data has come mainly from the "Equality in North Wales: Data and Evidence Document"[2] by our Data and Information Service. This document gathers data from various sources. Further information came for Welsh Government Action Plans. We have also used the Council's internal information to identify what needs to be done and what is possible.

More information on why we have decided on the objectives can be seen on page 21.

We have five objectives for 2024-28. One of these objectives, namely Objective 1, relates to employment and includes actions on the pay gap, as the specific duty requires us to do.

The specific duty also requires us to have objectives on each protected characteristic. Our decision has been to produce thematic objectives, and every objective works towards equality for each of the protected characteristics. This reduces duplication and makes it easier to identify factors that come from intersectionality (these are the additional barriers faced by people with more than one characteristic).

[1] Microsoft Word - Analysis of the Engagement.docx (llyw.cymru)
[2] Microsoft Word - 2023 Equality in North Wales Data and evidence report.docx (llyw.cymru)

Objective 1 – Employment: Acting to improve equality in the workplace

	Actions	Outcome	Timetable
1.1	Establish a staff forum / forums to discuss equality issues, so that our employees can contribute to the subject within the Council.	Staff will have begun to contribute to developments Staff to continue contributing	March 2025 Continuous
1.2	Review how we communicate with staff so that information is accessible and understandable to everyone; we received feedback from an external body that our documents were too clumsy and official.	Information, including employment policies, which is easy for everyone to undersand and reach	2024/26
1.3	Set the goal of working towards being a leading employer in this area, including paying attention to the following areas: • Not to put requirements that are not necessary in our job descriptions when advertising jobs in order to give as many people as possible the opportunity to apply. • How and where we advertise jobs. • Our image as an employer in our communities - being proactive in trying to attract people from all parts of society to work for Gwynedd Council.	Continue to be a member of the Disability Confident scheme, working to reach the highest level (Level 3) in the framework. Working to be recognised as a leading employer in this broad area, for all equality features.	March 2026 Continuous – over the duration of the plan

	There is a strong link between our plans at this stage and another of the Council's corporate priorities, namely our project on Workforce Planning.		
1.4	Continue to take steps to fully develop management and staff awareness of this area, including equality, inclusion, neurodiversity, sexual harassment, respect and dignity in the workplace.	Managers and staff to be aware of equality and inclusion issues, know where to access advice on different aspects and use that information in their teams as needed.	Continual – over the duration of the plan
1.5	Look at the way we explain and communicate the linguistic needs when advertising jobs. This is in order to improve the understanding of potential candidates and the public about the need for the Welsh Language skills and about the Council's statutory responsibilities to provide bilingual services.	Fewer complaints about the recruitment policy and discrimination and a better understanding among the public of the linguistic needs for jobs.	2024/27
1.6	Carry out a pay gap audit annually, considering what steps to take to try to close the gap. Getting to a position where we are able to carry out a pay gap audit based on disability and race as well.	Audit completed and informing discussions on action points	Annually
1.7	Conduct an equal pay audit every	Audit completed	2025/26

	three years		
1.8	Continue to try to improve the data about protected characteristics that is shared with us by our staff, as a basis for taking decisions in this important area.	The number of staff sharing information with us has increased, which will strengthen the information we have about our workforce.	Annual improvement

What difference do we expect to make by the end of the period?

We will have established steps where staff can take part and offer ideas on how Cyngor Gwynedd as an employer can improve things for people with equality characteristics. We will also take proactive steps to develop our image as an employer for people with equality characteristics, aiming to be progressive in the field. We will also ensure that our managers and staff have access to information to support them when dealing with employment matters that are associated with this area.

Objective 2 – Information: Improving our data about people with equality characteristics

	Actions	Outcome	Timetable
2.1	Update our engagement procedure to avoid duplication, by creating a better way of working and sharing results. Also strengthen diversity within the Citizens Panel.	Cyngor Gwynedd Engagement Group to look at the procedure. Act as required. Improve the diversity of our Citizens Panel.	2024-25 Continuous 2024-25
2.2	Create an easier and more accessible system of storing our equality data. The aim is to make it easier to use when amending policies and creating plans.	Have an electronic system in place. Keep the information up-to-date	2024-26 Continuous
2.3	Improve and update the data we have on Gwynedd in the Equality in North Wales document, filling in any gaps if possible.	Update the data as necessary	Continuous
2.4	Identify any gaps in the information we collect about the users of care services and then work to fill them. This will ensure that we collect data that is as complete as possible	A suitable recording system put in place to make it easier to fill in equality data when the individual is happy to share it. Gather and fill in the equality data of those cases that are already on our recording system, where possible and with the user's consent.	September 2024 Continuous

What difference do we intend to make by the end of the period?

We intend to improve the data we have in order to use it when creating or amending a policy or way of working, and provide a better service to the

people of Gwynedd. We will also ensure that we obtain suitable input from people with protected characteristics without overwhelming them by continual questioning. It is important to have a clear overview and understanding of the main problems facing the people with a different protected characteristic.

Objective 3: Systems: Ensuring that the Council is an anti-discriminatory organisation, by improving our internal arrangements

	Actions	Outcome	Timetable
3.1	Continue with the training framework to provide our staff at all levels within the Council with the resources and confidence to respect diversity and deal with a range of needs appropriately. Ensure that the training framework is extended to include a variety of equality characteristics / broad topics.	Training on Disability, Respect and Dignity, and Anti-racism. Move to examine other equality characteristics subjects and decide upon and arrange the necessary topics.	2024-2025 Continuous
3.2	Raise awareness of staff at all levels in the Council of the new Equality Impact Assessment procedure (see page 27) and provide support, information and training to ensure the standard of the work.	Training in place Raise awareness and provide assistance	2024-2025 Continuous
3.3	Make our website more accessible by producing and implementing an action plan. This will include working towards eliminating the use of PDF documents.	An action plan in place Implementing	2024-25 Continuous
3.4	Continue to work to reduce Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence	Continue to act in accordance with our action plan for the White Ribbon scheme	Continuous

What difference are we making?

Our aim is to ensure that the Council's arrangements give consideration to all equality characteristics and that our staff understand and accept their responsibilities in the field. We will ensure better understanding of the rights and needs of people with various characteristics by creating a variety of training titles. In addition, that consideration of equality characteristics is given the place it deserves when producing and amending policies and ways of working through our Equality Impact Assessment procedure. We will ensure that people receive the information they need by making our website more user-friendly. Promoting the White Ribbon scheme will also help staff understand their responsibility in the field.

Objective 4: Services: Ensure equality within our day-to-day work

	Actions	Outcome	Timetable
4.1	Inspect how accessible the Council's services are, then produce and implement an action plan	Inspection and action plan Implement	2024-26 The period of the Plan
4.2	The Museums and Arts Service will support the communities of Gwynedd by: • Providing inclusive programmes for our diverse communities, whether they are an exhibition, an activity, events, promotion opportunities, projects and grants • Ensure that the narrative in our museums is suitable (anti-racist etc.), and that the stories of people with particular characteristics are heard	Plan work programmes with objectives being a part of them. Report on the number of opportunities and on the feedback from them Create a system to record the improvements Ensure that the designing of new exhibitions and updating others is done inclusively; receive training and mentoring; consultation work and research. (Some elements have a specified target date such as the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) scheme for story reinterpretation. A grant is needed to realise others).	Continuous Continuous March 2024 Continuous and integrated into the work programme. Lloyd George Museum - December 2024 Storiel - 2028.

	• Working with communities of people with equality characteristics to remove barriers to using our museums and galleries	Feedback through engagement, customer satisfaction, responding to complaints, staff training. Recording, identifying and reducing barriers. A system to collect the feedback is needed. Specific engagement with the scheme for reinterpretation of the Lloyd George Museum. Action steps to arise from the feedback, and set a timetable. Further engagement will be required on the reinterpretation of Storiel history galleries . Further assessments to be arranged	Arrangements to gather feedback by March 2025 Continuous and integrated into the work programme By December 2024 Between 2024 and 2028
4.3	Continue to work to ensure that public transport is more accessible	Gather information about the needs of different groups Collaborate with other stakeholders such as operators, Transport for Wales and the Welsh Government.	Continuous Continuous
4.4	Services of the Housing and Property Department. • Carry out the activities of the Gwynedd Council Housing Action Plan which aims to	• Increase the opportunities for all residents of the county to have access to suitable accommodation. Better understanding of	Between 2024 – 2028

	"Ensure that the people of Gwynedd have access to a suitable, quality home, which is affordable and which improves their quality of life".	the obstacles that prevent the people of Gwynedd from finding and living in accommodation that meets their needs. • Consult with communities in order to establish the true demand for different types of homes and facilitate the process of commissioning new plans. • Better results for those who face socio-economic disadvantage by increasing the number of affordable houses available in Gwynedd through construction plans, house repairs and access to rented houses. • Ensure that Gwynedd houses are beneficial to the environment and offer energy efficiency benefits to residents.	
	• Establish a One Stop Shop which will be a new system that can respond to the needs of residents when submitting applications relating to housing in one central place.	• Council officers will be able to assess the customer's needs, directing one inquiry to a number of different units depending on what support the Council can offer. • Facilitate the process of submitting applications for Social Housing and improve access to the service.	2024 and onward

		• Establish a SPOA (single point of contact) to simplify the Housing Assistance Grant process, directing individuals to the services and providers that meet their needs.	

What difference are we making?

We will look at how accessible our services are to everyone and work to reduce any barriers. Our Museums and Arts Service will also build on what is already in place to provide for communities to get to contribute their voices to the narrative in our museums, to have more opportunities, fewer barriers and enable them to participate more in their culture and experience enjoyment, learning and health and well-being improvements. People have told us how important housing and transport are for people with certain equality characteristics and for those who live with socio-economic disadvantage, and we also have action points in these areas in order to improve people's living standards.

Objective 5: Schools: Improve equality within education

	Actions	Outcome	Timetable
5.1	Collect, analyse and act on data relating to cases of bullying and hate crime: • Identify training needs for school staff by analysing data/trends of bullying that are reported by schools. • Collaborate with welfare officers, the youth service, the police and other agencies to respond to findings/trends of bullying by providing training and prevention work to staff in the schools.	• Gwynedd schools reporting electronically every term (three times a year) on cases related to bullying. • The Education Department analysing the data on a termly basis, using findings to draw up a training plan/provision.	Establish in January 2025, to be operational every term
5.2	Identify the true financial and emotional cost of attending school for the children of Gwynedd and reduce costs and barriers to education, and implement a range of Mental Health and Well-being interventions to support learners, whatever their background and protected characteristics.	• Produce and distribute questionnaires with Headteachers, Governors, Staff and pupils at schools to identify the true cost of attending school. • Schools receiving a report on the findings of their school so they can revise policies and procedures for supporting families. • The Education Department supporting schools to adapt school arrangements and procedures by creating a resource to support families in the community.	November 2024 January 2025 2024 onwards

5.3	Identify, monitor and act to improve the attendance, punctuality and attainment of groups of pupils such as: children who are eligible for free school meals, looked after children, continual absences, additional learning needs and other various groups as highlighted by the data.	• Attendance being promoted and monitored across Gwynedd schools on a weekly basis. • A target of 95% being implemented across Gwynedd schools. • Attendance data (including various groups) being analysed to identify and act on aspects to be developed.	November 2024 and continuous Continuous Continuous
5.4	Establish effective arrangements to obtain children and young people's input through school councils and forums, ensuring that the pupil's voice is acted upon, irrespective of their protected characteristics and needs.	• The Gwynedd Youth Service established to obtain children and young people's input across Gwynedd schools, irrespective of their protected characteristics or their needs, to be considered at the authority's political and corporate level	2024 onwards

What difference are we making?

Our aim is to ensure equality of education and opportunity for all pupils, staff, parents and carers who receive services from our schools, irrespective of their protected characteristics and their needs. By improving equality within education, we will develop a culture of inclusion and diversity where every child who is linked with Gwynedd schools feels proud of their identity and are able to participate fully in school life. Pupils' attainment will be monitored, and we will use the data to support the pupils, raise standards and ensure inclusive education. We will tackle discrimination by facilitating and supporting schools to positively promote equality, challenging bullying and stereotypes and create an environment that fosters respect towards all. In Gwynedd we believe that diversity is a strength that should be respected and celebrated by everyone within and outside the schools.

Why did we choose these Objectives?

In the following information we talk about two periods of finding opinions. The engagement[3] took place between April and July, before we made any decision. The consultation (end of October to February) focused on finding the public's views on the draft objectives that were drawn up after the engagement. Our data has come from the "Equality in North Wales: Data and Evidence"[4] document which has gathered information from several sources. A further analysis of the effect on people with equality characteristics can be seen in the Impact Assessment.

Objective 1: Employment

There will be two objectives in the 2020-24 Plan regarding employment, which are improving our workforce's diversity and reducing pay gaps. This time we have decided to combine these because work has already been carried out on them.

In the engagement we didn't ask people to express their views on the need to include the objective on the pay gap because it is a topic that we have to include. But from talking to people in the meetings it was evident that there was support for the objective. That was also the case with the objective on our workforce's diversity, with 62.1% in favour of including it in 2024-28.

In the consultation there was good support for this objective with 85% of respondents agreeing or partially agreeing with the objective. Some were concerned with the points related to improving the diversity of our workforce thinking that it will be an exercise in ticking boxes and that we will not choose the best person for the job. The opposite is true. Our intention is to attract more people to apply for any job, in order to get the best choice of candidates. There is no intention to set targets or appoint people based on their equality characteristics.

Our internal data is insufficient at present to highlight pay gaps, with the exception of the gender pay gap, and improving this data is part of the actions.

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[3] Microsoft Word - Analysis of the Engagement.docx (llyw.cymru)

[4] Microsoft Word - 2023 Equality in North Wales Data and evidence report.docx (llyw.cymru)

Talking about Wales as a whole, we have not found data on every characteristic, but it shows that pay gaps do exist based on gender and disability. Data also shows that some cohorts of young people are less likely to be in employment e.g. disabled people and people from some ethnic minority groups, and this objective works towards removing barriers.

The Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales identify the need to act on employment, but our decision was to act on every characteristic.

This Objective takes positive action on Socio-economic disadvantage by ensuring that lower paid groups, or groups who find it difficult to secure work, are encouraged to apply for and retain jobs.

This local objective feeds in to North Wales Public Sector Equality Network (NWPSEN) equality objectives' "Objective 2: We will take steps to ensure that we are an equal opportunity employer and reduce pay gaps".

Objective 2: Information

61.3% of people felt that engagement was an important field after the engagement.

In the consultation there was support for this Objective, with 76% agreeing or partially agreeing. Some had concerns about privacy and confidentiality. Most of the data we collect comes from other sources and is therefore statistical in nature and most of our consultations are anonymous. We do not require anyone to disclose details of their protected characteristics and when we receive that information it is kept confidential with appropriate security measures and access is strictly limited.

When gathering data, it was clear that there was a lack of local information about many protected characteristics. It is likely that this is partly due to the low numbers. It is also clear that many consultations are happening and that we need to improve our ways of operating. We are keen to make sure that we share any message we receive about equality matters so that we act on barriers and reduce duplication.

The Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales also identify the need to act in this field, and the government

has established arrangements to do so. The plans require us as public organisations to ensure that we gather data, particularly in the areas of Education, Social Care and Employment. Our other objectives also contain matters pertaining to these action plans.

This Objective also corresponds with NWPSEN's Objective 6, which is to increase access to consultation and improve diversity within decisions.

Objective 3

67.3% of people felt there was a need to keep training in the plan after the consultation. 57.6% of people felt that assessing impact was important after the consultation.

This objective and objective 4 were one objective in the consultation. There was strong support for them with 84% agreeing or partially agreeing. Some were concerned that providing training would be too costly financially and in staff time. We feel that training is essential so that members of staff have a full understanding of the needs of different groups.

We agree that they are matters that require attention, but because they were considered during the time of the current Plan, we have decided to include them as action points within this objective this time.

Improving the website's accessibility stems partly from the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan but we have decided to expand this to include other characteristics as well, as this will also be important to other cohorts, and will provide better access to information.

In improving our internal arrangements, we are improving things for people with equality characteristics, therefore this corresponds with NWPSEN's Objective 3. – We will act to improve the Living Standards of people who are disadvantaged because of their protected characteristics.

Objective 4

There were strong calls for us to look at accessibility issues, particularly for disabled people, in the responses to the engagement, further supported in the consultation. Objective 3 and this objective were one objective in the consultation - we have now decided to split them. As stated in Objective 3

there was strong support for this objective with 84% agreeing or partially agreeing.

These actions look at accessibility in the broadest sense possible, including matters such as transport and access to information, which are matters that were raised in the exercises for gathering opinions. It will also cover other services that were mentioned, such as refuse collection and toilets.

The action point on museums comes from information in the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan but we have decided to expand it to include other characteristics as well. Some people were concerned about this action point, in case we wanted to try to change history and erase what had happened. But our intention here is to give a fuller picture of history, including stories of people who have not already been heard.

As a result of the consultation we have also added two action points for Transport and for Housing. The first is important because it is at the core of people's living standards, especially those living with socio-economic disadvantage, and for many other groups who do not have access to a car. The second is also intended to act on socio-economic disadvantage, which statistics show that people with certain protected characteristics experience.

This Objective responds to action points in a number of NWPSEN objectives, namely Objective 3 - We will act to improve the Living Standards of people who are disadvantaged because of their protected characteristics, Objective 3 - We will act to improve the Living Standards of people who are disadvantaged because of their protected characteristics and Objective 4 - We will improve Health, Wellbeing and Social Care outcomes

Objective 5: Schools

This objective is a new one this time. There is a duty on every school to update their Strategic Equality Plan every 4 years, in the same way as the Council. We believe that it would be beneficial to have a correlation between the Council's Equality Plan and those of the individual schools. The Authority has therefore proposed 4 Objectives for the schools, which appear here as action points. Each school will then decide whether the objectives are suitable for them and will explore what they will need to do to respond to the need locally. They are welcome to add other local Objectives too.

The available data, although slightly dated by now, shows that problems of bullying remain, and also that some cohorts are under-achieving within the education system. The more recent data shows that children and young people are experiencing problems with well-being and mental health conditions in light of Covid-19.

Some of these action points also come from information in the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan. However, we have decided to look at the field in its entirety rather than on one particular characteristic.

There was a strong response to this Objective in the consultation, with 86% agreeing or partially agreeing. Many comments had been made in the questionnaire and at the meeting, especially regarding bullying. Changes have been made as a result of those comments and others will be passed on to the schools in order to act locally. This Objective corresponds with NWPSEN's Objective 1, which is to Improve Outcomes in Educational Attainment and Well-being in Schools.

Do the Objectives satisfy the general duty?

We believe that the objectives give due attention to the three aims of the general duty.

Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act.

Objective 1 ensures that we ask staff members regarding discrimination, harassment and victimisation and operate in accordance with any problems that will be highlighted. Objective 2 gathers information that will help us to remove the cause of any discrimination. Objectives 3 and 4 ensure that we are fair to people who use our services and 5 does that specifically within schools.

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

Advancing equal opportunities involves:

- Removing or reducing the disadvantage that people with protected characteristics face.
- Taking steps to meet the specific needs of people with protected characteristics.

- Encouraging people with protected characteristics to participate fully in every activity, especially where they are not adequately represented.

The purpose of Objective 1 is to remove disadvantage and to attract applicants with protected characteristics for them to have an equal opportunity to apply for jobs, and then to thrive within our workforce. The forums will also encourage people to participate in the development of the organisation. Only by gathering sufficient information will we know what we need to work on first, and of course. It will place a focus on the key matters that affect the different characteristics and allow us to identify further steps that could most effectively address any disadvantage. Objectives 3, 4 and 5 ensure that we treat service users in accordance with their needs to give everyone the opportunity to experience the same results and encourage them to participate.

- **Foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

Fostering good relations involves taking steps to reduce prejudice and to increase the understanding between different groups of people.

All our objectives should do this, by ensuring fairness. In particular, ensuring better representation of the community within our workforce would make it easier for people to relate with the Council (Objective 1). Objectives 3, 4 and 5 will ensure that people get a service that suits them, and is suitable for them to use.

See also the Impact Assessment on Equality, the Welsh Language and the Socio-economic Duty.

How will we monitor the progress of the objectives?

Our intention following publishing the Plan is to create a comprehensive Action Plan to identify the exact work we need to do to achieve the Objectives. This Action Plan will be flexible, and we will adapt it when moving forward in order to respond to any matters arising. So will the individual impact assessments for each of the Objectives.

The internal monitoring procedure will be to report as one of the Council Plan's projects to the Member responsible for equality as part of the Performance Reporting procedure. We will also create an Annual Report that will be referred to the attention of the Council Cabinet and will be published publicly. We will also amend the Impact Assessment as required. As we have already mentioned, these objectives are a step along that road and it is very likely that the themes here will continue to the next period, as it is long-term work.

Additional matters

The specific duty's guidelines require us to specifically mention other matters within the Equality Plan. There are also further considerations under other legislation.

Do we have procedures to record and collect information regarding equality?

Although collecting information, especially from engagement, has been a part of the 2020-24 Plan, we have decided to include it as an objective in the current one also, as there is further work to be done. We want to ensure that enough information is easily available to officers when undertaking impact assessments, to ensure that due attention is given to the three aims of the general duty (see above). We also want to ensure that good use is made of the information collected.

We already gather information on pay differences regarding protected characteristics and publish it annually. We also undertake an audit on gender-based pay gaps every three years.

As part of the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network we have commissioned the document "Equality in North Wales: Data and Evidence Document" Link from our Data and Information Service, which brings together a wide range of information.

How do we assess impact and monitor the real and continuous impact of our policies and ways of working?

There was a specific Objective on assessing impact in the 2020-24 Plan. During this period, NWPSEN, namely North Wales equality officers' group, have created a comprehensive form which contains the impact on equality matters (protected characteristics and aims of the general duty), the Welsh Language and the Socio-economic Duty. We have adopted that form, with local changes, as our impact assessment template. Considerable work was done to put it in an electronic format and at the end of the period the new form was being piloted. We will roll it out across the Council at the beginning of this Plan period by promoting it in various ways, including training.

An important part of this form is the action plan for monitoring which is at the end of the form. It is possible to assume an impact and by asking people with life experience, we can do that quite accurately at times, but only when the policy or the way of working is in place can we see every impact. It is therefore fundamental to check that the impact was as we had assumed.

How will we promote knowledge and understanding of the general and specific duties among the workforce?

Training is an action point within two of the objectives, namely Objective 1 and Objective 3. This will of course include an understanding of the duties.

What is the impact on the Welsh language?

We are required, under Part 4 of The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, to consider the impact of the Objectives on people's opportunities to use the Welsh language, and to ensure that Welsh is not treated less favourably than English. The work noted in Objective 1 to look at the requirements within posts and to create a staff forum include language elements, which means better understanding within the Council and the wider community on language requirements when recruiting and the Council's statutory responsibilities under the Standards. Also, the work to improve our website in Objective 3. For more information see the Impact Assessment.

Do these Objectives comply with the duties of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?

The well-being aim in question here is "A More Equal Wales" as this is the purpose of the work. It will also contribute towards a prosperous Wales, as it will improve the situation of people with equality characteristics; and Wales of cohesive communities, where people with different protected characteristics receive better fairness. The five ways of working are also met here. For more information see the Impact Assessment.