

# Annual Equality Report Cyngor Gwynedd 2022-2023



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## **Foreword**

I am glad to present the 2022-23 Annual Report for Gwynedd Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24. We are now three quarters of the way through the period of the Plan, and I am glad to say that much of the work has now been carried out.

The past year has seen us establish our Equality Training Framework and we are currently adding titles to it. We have been preparing for a new round of engagement on equality issues, this time regarding establishing objectives for the period of the new Strategic Equality Plan, namely 2024-28. We have also received the salary audit which showed that we pay our officers fairly within the requirements of employment law, and have been working with a company called Inclusive Employers in order to identify ways to improve the diversity of our workforce.

I am now looking forward to seeing our progress towards the objectives during the last year of the Plan. It must be said that our objectives are long term and our intention was to improve the situation during the 4 years, knowing that the work will continue into the next period in many areas.

**Councillor Menna Trenholme**  
**Corporate Support Cabinet Member**



## Introduction

In March 2020, the Council published its 'Cyngor Gwynedd Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24' (the Plan) to continue with the work of Ensuring Fairness for All which is one of the Council's improvement priorities. This fulfils public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010. The Act has been designed to reduce inequalities between specific groups by asking public bodies to give due regard to the need to:

- 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 Plan looks at fairness in relation to nine 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

*(Equality Act 2010)*

Since April 2021, public organisations in Wales also have a new responsibility under the Socio-economic Duty, namely:

When making strategic decisions about how they deliver their functions, they are required to consider how appropriate their practice is in a way that has been designed to reduce inequalities in terms of outcomes that stem from socio-economic disadvantage.

The Plan sets out and describes the work that would form the Council's priority in this field for the four years in question, and we have divided the work into five objectives, namely:

- Objective 1: Strengthen and deepen the capacity and commitment of Cyngor Gwynedd Staff and Elected Members in the field of Equality, by ensuring that they receive the right training.

- Objective 2: Improve the information we have from and about people with protected characteristics.
- Objective 3: Build on the work already carried out to embed Equality Impact Assessments as a tool to ensure better decision-making.
- Objective 4: Act to reduce the gender pay gap and identify any pay gap based on any other characteristic.
- Objective 5: Act to attract a range of applicants in order to increase the diversity of our workforce.

The first two years of the Plan were difficult and unprecedented with the Covid-19 crisis leading to lock-downs and additional unexpected work. This led to us using different work methods and this in turn has affected the timelines for our objectives. Nevertheless, we are confident that we will complete the work as pledged within the timeframe. The challenges we faced have also brought some advantages, specifically in methods of working, and we anticipate that these methods are here to stay. One example is holding hybrid meetings to relaunch our Equality Core Group.

The crisis highlighted a number of inequalities and the Welsh Government has responded by looking at two fields in particular, namely anti-racism and LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning etc.). In the last year, economic factors have become more prominent, with more people suffering socio-economic deprivation. In light of this we have considered whether we need to amend or add to our objectives for this period. Our decision is that this is not required for the time being, as our objectives already deal with matters such as the socio-economic duty, race and LGBTQ+ rights. We therefore concluded that our priority should be to continue to address the objectives that we already have in place for the last year of this plan.

In this report we outline, per objective, the action points we have committed to in our Strategic Equality Plan, what we were hoping to achieve during 2022/23 and what we were able to achieve in reality. The report also looks at the type of information the Council gathers in the field of equality and shows how we use it.

## **Objective 1:**

**Strengthen and deepen the capacity and commitment of Cyngor Gwynedd Staff and Elected Members in the field of Equality, by ensuring that they receive the right training.**

### **Action Point 1:**

We will create an equality training programme as a core field that will be varied, innovative, specific, and of the highest quality. It will be appropriately tailored for all staff members at all levels, along with Elected Members, in order to improve their understanding of their duty towards equality.

### **What did we promise to do in 2022/23?**

That the preparatory work for the training programme (The Training Framework) would be completed by the start of the period and that the programme would be ongoing from then on.

In the 2021-22 Annual Report we said that we would concentrate on training for Members and managers, along with intertwining equality elements with a range of new training titles that support managers and would find better ways of promoting training.

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

The timetable has slipped as it was not possible to begin this work in 2020. We have not completed the full programme, however there has been progress in the work.

The equality e-module has been mandatory since June 2022 and therefore every member of staff is required to complete it. The completion statistics vary substantially across Council Departments. The responsibility lies with the Heads of Department to encourage their staff to complete the module and to identify the barriers that are specific to cohorts of staff. Every Head of Department receives regular reports about the number of staff in their Department who have completed the module.

We are aware that more work is needed to encourage staff, particularly front-line staff, to complete the module and we are available and keen to work with Departments that call us in, to improve access, to ensure training that is more relevant to different cohorts and to consider alternative learning methods as needed.

There is an Unconscious Bias course available on the programme. We also intend to commission LGBTQ+ training through GiSDA, with a pilot course to be introduced early in 2023/24. We have been given to understand that the WLGA is developing anti-racism training.

Members have been offered five sessions of the Your Responsibility for Equality training. The work of providing training for managers on impact assessments has been delayed (see Point 3.1).

We blend Equality into other training titles such as Croeso i'r Cyngor, Ffordd Gwynedd and Customer Care.

Our priorities for 2023/24 will be to complete our Equality Training Framework and promote what is available.

### **Action Point 2:**

Elected Members have access to the Members' Portal, an electronic intranet which contains information about training and events relevant to them. Over the period of the Plan, we will update the Portal with training guidelines and information relevant to equality. We will also hold a promotional campaign by using the Members' e-newsletter, 'Rhaeadr', to improve understanding about the information available on the Portal.

### **What did we promise to do in 2022/23?**

This action point has been completed, and the information is updated as needed.

### **Action Point 3:**

'Ffordd Gwynedd' is the name given to the "way" we in Cyngor Gwynedd will ensure that we place the people of Gwynedd at the heart of everything we do. It is intended to create a situation where the experience of individuals who come into contact with the Council are positive and that they meet their needs. We will continue to work on strengthening the equality element within Ffordd Gwynedd training, and the Welcome to the Council sessions for new staff members.

### **What did we promise to do in 2022/23?**

The work was completed during 2020/21.

## **Objective 2:**

### **Improve the information we have from and about people with protected characteristics.**

#### **Action Point 1:**

In order to understand any barriers that the residents of Gwynedd who have various protected characteristics may face when dealing with the Council, we will conduct a comprehensive public survey. The survey will identify those barriers and what we could do to respond. This work will include a variety of different methods in order to reach a cross-section of people, especially those who do not usually participate. We will ensure confidentiality for all participants.

#### **What did we promise to do in 2022/23?**

In the 2021-22 Annual Report it was explained that the work timetable had changed in light of Covid-19, with a view to completing the analysis as soon as possible.

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

The work is now finished and a report has been shared with the Elected Member who is responsible for equality. Due to the time that has elapsed since the exercise began the results will be incorporated in the 2024-28 Strategic Equality Plan.

Our intention in moving forward is to incorporate the work of gathering information about aspirations and the barriers that face people with equality characteristics in other consultations that take place regularly, and by visiting various groups regularly.

At the end of 2022/23, we were about to engage on our new equality objectives for the Equality Plan 2024-28. We have created a questionnaire that will be available on-line, in paper format and in other formats and languages as required. We will also meet with various groups to ensure that as many people as possible have an opportunity to contribute.

#### **Action Point 2:**

We will work to develop more contact with groups or individuals who have protected characteristics, by continuing to work with the Equality Core Group and extending its membership. Contact must be made with additional groups of people with specific protected characteristics in order to continue to obtain various views. We will also take further measures to ensure that our Citizens' Panel includes a variety of people with protected characteristics, by targeting as required.

**What did we promise to do in 2022/23?**

No specific timetable has been noted for this work therefore we are expected to implement it every year.

**What did we do?**

We have relaunched the Equality Core Group since April 2023 with an increased membership, have set out a programme of regular meetings to discuss matters with Group members and we are also looking for representatives from new groups to join us.

**Action Point 3:**

By working with managers and heads of departments, we will ensure that everyone who works for the Council understands the needs of people with specific protected characteristics. We will use the information gathered to improve our services and create Equality Impact Assessments. Our Access/Equality Policy will need to be reviewed, whilst also considering the operational recommendations of the Equality Core Group.

**What did we promise to do in 2022/23?**

No specific work was identified for the period in question.

**What did we do?**

The Access/Equality Policy (under the Equality and Inclusion policy) has been in place since 2021. The remainder of the work is ongoing.



## **Objective 3:**

### **Build on the work already carried out to embed Equality Impact Assessments as a tool to ensure better decision-making.**

#### **Action Point 1:**

We will set up specific additional training for relevant staff and Elected Members. It will focus on the advantages of an Equality Impact Assessment and provide guidance and advice on undertaking them in order to give thorough consideration to any potential impacts on the residents of Gwynedd. The content of the training will be regularly reviewed in order to ensure that it is up to date.

#### **What did we promise do in 2022/23?**

No work was set for this year, as it was expected that the work would be completed in 2021/22.

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

There was a delay in the work of creating training last year because we decided to introduce an electronic method for assessing equality impact. Whilst that is in the pipeline we have been using an interim template that includes the necessary questions to meet our duty in the fields of equality, socio-economic deprivation and the Welsh language. Elected Members have been offered the 'Your Responsibility for Equality' training which includes an extensive part on the importance of assessing impact and how that helps members to make wise decisions.

We will prioritise implementing a new procedure and creating training by the end of the Plan period.

#### **Action Point 2:**

Over the coming years, we will strengthen arrangements by ensuring that Elected Members are increasingly confident to challenge the quality of Equality Impact Assessments as a natural part of their work in receiving reports/information as a basis for decision-making in the Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees and Performance Challenge meetings. The above training will be essential to ensure that this procedure works well, and we will provide guidelines for the various meetings.

#### **What did we promise to do in 2022/23?**

Nothing specific was noted for the year.

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

Training has been offered to Elected Members and several sessions have taken place.

### **Action Point 3:**

We will continue to work with Council Departments to ensure that due regard is given to equality requirements within any process of identifying savings or cuts. We will ensure that Equality Impact Assessments will be conducted in a timely manner and will be of the required standard to contribute to the process of identifying any plans to identify any negative implications that decisions on budgetary cuts will have for specific minority groups in Gwynedd and mitigate them where possible.

### **What did we promise to do in 2022/23?**

No specific timetable has been noted for this work in the Equality Plan. Rather, it is expected for the matter to be addressed as required.

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

The equality officers had input on the savings proposals within the 2023/24 budget noting any further assessment needs.

## **Objective 4:**

### **Act to reduce the gender pay gap and identify any pay gap based on any other characteristic.**

#### **Action Point 1:**

Over the next few years, we will focus on encouraging more staff to complete the optional equality data questionnaire in order to increase the amount of data we have on our workforce. This will allow us to set a baseline, identify gaps in our workforce and to undertake audits based on other protected characteristics. We will employ various methods of doing this during the period of the Plan, including an advertising campaign and raising the awareness of staff members who are new to the self-service system.

#### **What did we promise to do in 2022/23?**

This work receives continuous attention every year, and consequently no specific steps have been put forward for 2022/23.

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

As noted in previous years, the numbers that have shared this information with the Council as their employer are low; we understand that this is a challenge among public sector bodies in general. The number of those who completed it on 31 March 2023 is very similar to the previous year despite our continued work on improving it. We will continue to review our methods as we move forward and will seek to encourage individuals to share the information with us.

#### **Action Point 2:**

We will continue to conduct an annual audit on the pay gap between men and women, and by collecting the data in accordance with Action Point 1, will work to develop our ability to undertake such an audit in relation to other protected characteristics. In addition, we will undertake a pay audit every three years in order to ensure that we continue to pay equal wages for the type of work being achieved. We will also work towards putting plans in place to reduce any gaps that emerge in light of the audit.

#### **What did we promise to do in 2022/23?**

To complete an equal pay review and, subject to the results, create an action plan to respond to the conclusions. It was our aim to look at considering pay in the form of other protected characteristics e.g. in terms of disability, race, if the quality of the data enabled this.

## **What did we do?**

The audit has been completed and it shows that we provide equal pay for similar jobs for men and women. Therefore, an action plan was not required. As we do not have sufficient information (see Action Point 1 above), it is not possible for us to assess on any other basis, and therefore seeking to improve the quality and diversity of our data on staff characteristics is our priority in moving forward.

## **Action Point 3:**

Work has also been ongoing as part of the Women in Leadership Project (one of the improvement priorities [in the Council Plan 2018-23](#)). We have identified that the number of women in management roles in the Council is disproportionately low, given that women form 70% of the entire workforce. The project's main objective is to increase the number of women who apply for and attain leadership positions within the Council by reviewing the conditions and the working environment in order to attract more women to undertake these posts in future.

## **What did we promise to do in 2022/23?**

The project noted:

- Arrange further awareness raising sessions for male managers in the Council
- Consider the suitability of the constitution of appointment panels for posts
- Introduce a specific monitoring programme for women in the workplace
- Review the success of the programme for developing potential for women
- Continue to advise on a review of work conditions in relation to women in leadership.

## **What progress did we make in 2022/23?**

A virtual panel conversation was held for the organisation's male managers in June 2022, with the panel members including external and internal speakers. The panel was asked about their experiences and attitudes towards women in leadership and there was a further opportunity for the audience of 30 to ask questions and contribute.

A package of schemes to adapt recruitment and appointment arrangements is currently being drawn up for piloting, initially, later this year. A full consultation was held with the Project Group when the existing Recruitment and Appointment Policy was reviewed in 2021 but this package has a view to:

- Review and revise the wording of job advertisements and further details;
- Experiment with the introduction of anonymous manager application forms for drawing up short-lists

- Ensure that there are two female members on every appointment panel for leadership and management posts within the Council;
- Ensure that our arrangements for future working do not place women at a disadvantage when they consider applying for management posts;
- Invite team leaders (where women are in the majority), to join the managers' network in order to promote and support the aim of ensuring better balance between men and women at senior management levels in the future.

The Developmental Programme was launched as part of the project offer on International Women's Day 2022. The Programme has been drawn up to offer guidance, support and the opportunity to network with other women within the Council who wish to take advantage of the provision and this fresh encouragement to apply for, and achieve, leadership roles.

## **Objective 5:**

### **Act to attract a range of applicants for posts in order to increase the diversity of our workforce**

#### **Action Point 1:**

We will use the information that has been gathered from the equality questionnaire (see Objective 4, Action Point 1) and will conduct research and engage with the public and our staff in order to discover any factors that prevent specific cohorts of people with protected characteristics from applying for jobs. We will also work to discover ways of encouraging them to apply, e.g. by advertising jobs on a wider level than the Council's website alone, in order to attract a broader range of applications.

#### **What did we promise to do in 2022/23?**

No specific work has been identified in the Strategic Equality Plan as it is continuous work. In the Annual Report for 2021/22 we noted our intention to consult with the Inclusive Employers company to obtain a direction for a long term plan in this field (see point 3 below).

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

The assessment was completed with Inclusive Employers and feedback was obtained to provide a basis for an action plan.

#### **Action Point 2:**

Collaborate with other public bodies within our region such as North Wales Police or Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board in order to address any barriers identified. This could also provide access to a wider range of people, bearing in mind that the equality profile of all workforces are unlikely to be the same.

#### **What did we promise to do in 2022/23?**

This work is continuous; therefore no specific work had been identified for this year.

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

This regional work has seen further delay, but the project is now being implemented. The first task will be to create a questionnaire asking about the obstacles people in the region are experiencing when they look for work in the public sector. This field is also being addressed as part of the Council's wider project on planning the workforce.

### **Action Point 3:**

Prioritise working towards reaching Level 2 of the 'Disability Confident' scheme in order to be a 'Confident Employer' and look into becoming a Stonewall Champion.

#### **What did we promise to do in 2022/23?**

In the Strategic Equality Plan it was said that we would work to reach Level 2 accreditation by September 2022. The Annual Report for 2021/22 noted our intention to collaborate with the Inclusive Employers company rather than Stonewall to address every equality characteristic with the work starting in Summer 2022.

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

During the first year of service, it was decided that we would not apply to become Stonewall Champions, and instead would obtain input from *Inclusive Employers* on our employment systems on a broader level rather than concentrating on one specific characteristics. Consequently, we delayed the application to reach level 2 of the Government's 'Disability Confident' scheme. Having received feedback from the Inclusive Employers company in April 2023, we are now working on developing our entire method of inclusive recruitment, including getting back to the 'Disability Confident' assessment, with a view to reaching Level 2 of the plan as soon as possible and within the lifespan of this Equality Plan.

## Information

In accordance with the guidelines of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Cyngor Gwynedd is required to report annually on the information we gather in the field of equality.

- **Monitoring of Staff Equality Details**

Because completing the form is optional (in accordance with the guidelines), not enough people have completed it. We have recognised this and are working to encourage more people to complete it (Objective 4, Action Point 1). When we have sufficient information, we will be able to identify pay gaps, on a wider level than merely gender-based (Objective 4, Action Point 2) and see if action is needed to improve the diversity of our workforce (Objective 5). Around 48% of the workforce had completed the questionnaire on 31 March 2023, a figure which is very similar to the previous year. The information on the equality characteristics of our workforce can be found in Appendix 1.

- **Complaints and concerns**

Six formal equality-related concerns were received during the period. After investigation, it was determined that two of them were valid. One was in relation to a bus operator, and an apology was received from the Council and the company. The second complaint was about the parking arrangements in Ysbyty Gwynedd and an apology was received and the hospital pledged to erect more signs (as the Council's responsibility there is in relation to enforcement only).

Those that were found to be invalid were as follows: an allegation that a street-works matter was dealt with in a racist manner, the Council's language and disability policy, the provision in a business unit let by the Council, that a person's disability was not considered when they were being dealt with by the homelessness service and access to a particular part of a beach for a disabled person.

A number of informal complaints were also brought to the equality officers' attention, relating to the following within the Council; property, language policy, grants, questionnaire, beaches, education, housing and parking enforcement, street enforcement. Of these, and following investigations, four were found to be valid, namely complaints regarding the questionnaire, housing and two relating to beaches.

As the complaints were so varied, there was no pattern to identify, apart from beaches, where a number of complaints were received from disabled people. They varied in nature and it was therefore decided to carry out an impact assessment of the issues across the county, to find out how to reduce the obstacles. The preparatory work has taken place and the Maritime Service is committed to completing the work during 2023/24 with the input and support of the equality officers.



- **Engagement**

Although the Council often engages with the public on all sorts of topics, we have realised that we do not have enough specific information about the precise barriers facing the people of Gwynedd when engaging with the Council. Objective 2 addresses this. The Communication and Engagement Service encourages including the equality questions in every survey.

At the end of the period we were about to begin engaging with the public on our Strategic Equality Plan for 2024/28. This will be in the form of an on-line questionnaire with paper copies, but we also intend to meet with various groups to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

We also collaborate with the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network, namely a group of equality officers from public organisations in the region, to engage regionally every 2 years or so. This has not happened since Covid-19 but we intend to restart during 2023/24.

Of course, we also have access to the information gathered by the government e.g. for the Action Plans it has in the fields of race, LGBTQ+ and disability, and that gathered by other organisations including the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

- **Quantitative Data**

The North Wales Public Sector Equality Network, in conjunction with the Public Service Boards, created a regional data document in 2019/20 for the Equality Plan 2020-24. It was on the same lines as the Welsh Government's *Is Wales Fairer?* The Network has received funding from the Public Services Board again to create a similar document for determining the Equality Objectives 2024-28. Information from the Census will of course be included in this.

Again, we also have access to information the Government has gathered for various purposes, including the Action Plans and of course the information that will emerge from the 2021 Census will be very useful.

### **The use of the information to meet the three aims of the general duty**

The specific duties placed on public bodies by the Welsh Government note that it must be explained how the information is used to satisfy the three aims of the general duty:

- eliminate 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 ways in which Cyngor Gwynedd uses the above information to meet the three aims include:

- **Improve the diversity of our workforce** - the information that we gather from the staff questionnaire, along with information about the county in general, is used for this purpose.
- **Staffing policies in specific fields** - the Council has a number of employment policies to prohibit workplace harassment and victimisation, and these are evidence-based e.g. a whistle-blowing policy and a dignity at work policy as well as policies to prevent discrimination in the workplace, e.g. a menopause policy and transgender policy.
- **Specific procedures** - we also of course have procedures to ensure respect and dignity for our service users. The Equality and Inclusion Policy (see Objective 2) also provides an outline of what is needed to ensure fairness for all and it will be reviewed as needed based on the evidence gathered.
- **Impact assessment** - we are in the process of drawing up a new method of assessing impact as part of Objective 3. This of course includes consideration of the three aims and any assessment will have to be evidence-based. We will gather as much information as possible in one place as a resource for completing assessments.
- **Day-to-day work** - as each one of us possesses at least five protected characteristics, every part of the Council's work contributes towards well-being based on equality in some way. Services gather information in their own fields and use the above-mentioned information to identify the best way of securing equal opportunities for specific groups. Examples of this work can be seen in our Press Releases which are available [here](#).
- **Training** - we use the information to identify specific areas that need to be addressed. It is important that staff members are aware of the need to consider equality in their work every day therefore the equality e-module, which is based on the three aims, is mandatory training.