

# Annual Equality Report Gwynedd Council 2021-22



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## Foreword

This Annual Report is submitted after the end of my term as the Elected Member with responsibility for equality. Having said this, equality is a very important field to me and as the Council's Deputy Leader I will certainly continue to promote the field especially as the Ensuring Fairness for All project I one of the Council's improvement priorities.

It must be said that the two years since the 2020-24 Equality Plan was adopted by the Cabinet at the beginning of March 2020 have been difficult. The pandemic has had a significant impact on our methods of working and on our schedules. I am therefore pleased to be able to report that we have been able to progress during the year. Although we have not been able to achieve everything we had hoped, a great deal of preparatory work had been undertaken and we are on the right track to complete everything within the Plan's lifespan.



During the year, it was a pleasure to submit the new Equality and Inclusion Policy to the Cabinet, which they subsequently approved. The decision to work with Inclusive Employers to improve our employment policies is exciting. It is also good to be informed of all the work that has been undertaken by Council Services to ensure fairness and eliminate obstacles outside the Equality Plan's Action Plan, and examples of this work can be seen at the end of this Report.

Another important thing to note in the field of equality are the refugees who had started to arrive from Ukraine by March 2021. We very much welcome them here to Gwynedd, as we do the other refugees we support. We are trying to give them as much support as possible, while of course deploring the reason they have had to come here.

I am now pleased to be able to hand over the reins to my fellow councillor, Menna Jones, knowing that the field is in safe hands.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "N. Jeffreys".

Councillor Nia Jeffreys,  
Gwynedd Council Cabinet Member  
for Corporate Support

## Foreword

Thank you very much Nia, I am very proud to take the responsibility for equality on behalf of the Cabinet. I appreciate how important it is to ensure that the Council's services are suitable for everyone.

I am also looking forward to seeing the projects in the Equality Scheme come to fruition over the next two years. Having a range of courses in the field of equality will be useful for our staff, and I'm really looking forward to seeing what improvements we can make in our employment arrangements. The developments in the areas of impact assessment and engagement with the people of Gwynedd are also very exciting.

Councillor Menna Jones,  
Gwynedd Council Cabinet Member



# 1. Introduction

In March 2020, the Council published the 'Gwynedd Council Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24' (the Plan) in order to continue with the work of Ensuring Fairness for All. 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 attention 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 terms of nine protected characteristics, i.e.:

- 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)

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 Gwynedd Council 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 two years since the Plan became operational have been very difficult for everyone. The crisis caused by Covid-19 has highlighted a number of inequalities and it is important that we

look at our services in the light of this to ensure that we are fair. Lockdown led us to operate differently, e.g. more use of information technology, which has caused problems in some ways but has also been an opportunity to progress methods of working. It has affected our schedules as we have had to find and get accustomed to the new ways of working and people have had different priorities.

We have also looked at the 5 objectives of the Plan, in the same way as last year, to ensure that they remain suitable as things start to improve and stabilise. Our conclusion is that they are suitable. We have not identified any need to add to the objectives at this time and our priority will be to complete the work that has been identified within the lifetime of the Plan.

This report outlines, according to objectives, what action points we have committed to in our Strategic Equality Plan, what we hoped to achieve during 2021/22 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 equality is embedded in the Council's day-to-day work.



# Objective 1:

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

As noted in the Equality Plan, the Council does not believe that all staff members fully understand the need to prioritise equality considerations, or they are uncertain of how to do this properly. We have identified the need to reassess our training materials to make them more fit for purpose, and easier to use. Furthermore, we have identified the need for equality principles to be incorporated into other relevant training, in order to embed equality deeper within the Council's work.

Our aim in doing this is to ensure that members of the workforce, whatever their roles, have a thorough understanding of the field and the confidence to act on their duty towards individuals and groups with protected characteristics. Elected Members will also understand and be more confident in their duty to challenge and make decisions.

## **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 on all levels, along with Elected Members, in order to improve their understanding of their duty towards equality.

### **What did we promise to do in 2021/22?**

- consider the effectiveness of our current training and discover what would help staff to understand more about the field
- work with Council Managers in order to discover which presentation methods would be most suitable for the needs of various staff, e.g. front-line staff, managers
- commission training providers who have life experience of the field to provide specialist face-to-face training to our staff as required.

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

By now, training via the Remote Learning Environment (RLE) has taken hold and we have started to use it in the field of equality. We have provided on-line training for some services and this training is available for other services.

We have noted that it is difficult to find Welsh-medium ready-made training and this has forced us to consider alternative methods and have been unable to find an e-module to use. Therefore, we decided to adapt the one we already have while waiting to see if Welsh Government has ideas in light of the race, LGBT+ and disability action plans they are in the process of producing. This e-module is nearly ready to be published and it will be one of the core e-modules that will be mandatory for the entire workforce to complete. Our intention is to ensure that everyone receives basic information about the field.

We have volunteered to be part of the national 'digital learning' project that creates Equality learning resources, in the hope that this will be a valuable addition to the 'package' of resources we have.

Our further priorities for 2022/23 will be to complete our Equality Training Framework, by

creating training for Elected Members and managers on impact assessments and duties of the Equality Plan. We will also intertwine equality elements with a range of new training titles that support managers to lead teams and find better ways promote the use of the non-mandatory training using the information we have gathered from the recent survey.

## **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 2021/22?**

We will update the Members' Portal, providing information on equality including information about the Council's and the Member's duties regarding equality and the new Socio-economic Duty.

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

The Members' Portal has been revamped and it includes information on equality, the new socio-economic duty and the equality training. It will be further promoted to new Council Members from May onwards in order to explain their responsibility for equality. Other than the promotion work, which is an ongoing matter, this action point has therefore been completed.

## **Action Point 3:**

'Ffordd Gwynedd' is the name given to the 'way' we in Gwynedd Council will ensure that we place the people of Gwynedd at the heart of everything we do. We aim to create a situation in which individuals' experiences when they come into contact with the Council will be positive and meet their needs. In moving forward, we will continue to work on strengthening the equality element as part of the 'Ffordd Gwynedd' training. This will also be the case for the Welcome to the Council sessions for new staff members.

### **What did we promise to do in 2021/22?**

The work noted above was completed in 2021/22, therefore, this action point has been completed.

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

We continued to act in accordance with changes to the training. If further work is undertaken on the Ffordd Gwynedd and Welcome to the Council training, equality will continue to be a crucial part of them and will be strengthened if possible.

# Objective 2:

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

Putting the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do is a cornerstone to the way the Council works and this, of course, includes people with various protected characteristics. It is not possible to do this without receiving and acting on the expert opinion of the people in question. Although information has been gathered about the residents of Gwynedd, we have identified that we are not doing enough as a Council to ensure that the voices of people with protected characteristics are included as a matter of course when making everyday decisions.

Our aim in doing this is to acquire a better understanding of the needs and barriers faced by people with protected characteristics who receive our services, and we can put that to use in order to improve our procedures. We can use our existing networking groups to take advantage of meetings and events that have been organised already.

## **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 2021/22?**

To complete the aforementioned survey and move on to part 2 of the survey, in order to work with groups who haven't taken part in the survey yet.

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

Although the Covid-19 crisis meant that our way of working had to be adapted, and that the timetable has also significantly changed, we were able to complete an on-line survey by 30 April. The aim of the exercise was to find out if the people of Gwynedd faced barriers or unfairness when dealing with the Council.

We have completed the analysis and started to act on the main messages internally but the findings have not yet been shared with the Member. Responses showed that a significant majority of Council users felt that they were treated fairly when receiving services. On the other hand, respondents had provided a great deal of observations to help us to improve our services.

This survey, as well as the staff survey, also informed us of ways to improve our employment arrangements (see Objectives 4 and 5).

We will now proceed to complete the work required on the analysis, and the work deriving from the responses. We are now of the opinion that this work should be an ongoing part of the work program moving forward.

## 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 it. Contact must be made with additional groups of people with specific protected characteristics in order to continue to receive various views. We will also take further steps to ensure that our Residents' Panel includes a variety of people with protected characteristics, by targeting as required.

### What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

This is continuous work, therefore no specific work has been identified for this period.

### What did we do?

The work of communicating with organisations has continued during 2021-22. A number of groups have shown interest in joining and have been placed on the mailing list. Unfortunately, the numbers attending the meetings were disappointing. We will work in 2022-23 to improve this and to seek alternative ways of holding the meeting that will attract more attendees.

## 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 2021/22?

This action point was ongoing work but we set a goal of reviewing the Access/Equality Policy by January 2022.

### What did we do?

It was resolved to bring the Access and Equality Policy together in one document and that Equality and Inclusion Policy was approved by the Cabinet in July 2021. It is therefore operational and provides guidance for staff members on approaches to ensure that obstacles are eliminated.

The work of promoting equality messages among staff is progressing.

# Objective 3:

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

Although the number and quality of our assessments have improved during the time of the Equality Plan 2016-20, there is room for further improvement. By using the assessments to their full potential, we can ensure that we put all the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do, by giving due attention to equality matters. Our intention is to ensure that decisions are made on a firm basis at every level of the Council as staff and Elected Members fully understand their duties and are able to carry them out.

## **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 full 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 to do in 2021/22?**

Set up specific training on the impact assessment of a new/adapted policy or procedure for Members.

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

The North Wales Public Sector Equality Network resolved to create a regional template. This intended to create a standard template that would be easier to use for partnership work and includes the new socio-economic duty as well as questions to comply with the Welsh Language Standards and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. We have adapted the template to be used in Gwynedd and it is set on an electronic app to facilitate its use and it will be operational by the summer. Once this work is completed, we will be able to offer training on it.

There has been some slippage in the work because the technical expertise has been diverted to work on the Ukraine refugee project. Meanwhile, an interim template is available, which includes the required questions.

## **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 2021/22?**

Complete the guidelines for Members who are members of different meetings. Otherwise, it is noted as continuous work, therefore, there is no specific timetable.

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

It has not been possible to complete this work on the equality impact assessments and, therefore (see above), so we have been unable to complete the guidance for Members . Having said this, information on equality, including impact assessments, has been uploaded on the new members' portal and guidance on the socio-economic duty has been provided to scrutiny workshops during 2021/22.

Council elections will take place in May and training will be offered for Elected Members soon afterwards.

### **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 timely and high- quality Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken and that they contribute to the process of identifying any plans in order to recognise 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 2021/22?**

This work is continuous and takes place as required.

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

As there was no need to identify new savings or cuts in the period in question, no action was required on this particular point. However, Council staff and departments have received ongoing help and support with impact assessments in other fields.

# Objective 4:

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

Although the previous two audits have demonstrated that the Council provides equal pay to women and men, the average pay gap continues, similarly to every other local authority. On the whole, this is due to the fact that women are less likely to apply, and therefore are less likely to be offered jobs on higher pay scales within the Council. We have already identified this as a matter of priority that needs to be addressed, which is why the 'Women in Leadership' project is included in the Gwynedd Council Plan 2018-2023.

Although national evidence shows that other wage gaps exist, such as the difference between disabled people and the rest of any workforce, it proves difficult to gather enough information within the Council to undertake assessment more broadly. We depend on staff members to volunteer the information. As with every other public organisation, the numbers who do so are low.

Our intention in implementing this goal is to have more women applying for leadership positions, to monitor and reduce the gender-based pay gap, and to identify other gaps and begin work to mitigate these.

## **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 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 2021/22?**

This is continuous, long-term work, therefore no specific work had been identified for this year.

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

As noted last year, the numbers that have provided this information are low, and this situation is also real in other public sector organisations. Due to action, and with the support of Heads of Departments, the numbers are slowly increasing but further work is to be done to ensure that more information is shared. We have identified the fields that need the most work and we will continue to act to improve the situation. It is only then we will have sufficient information in order to identify any problems.

During the year we looked at the performance of each Department and collaborated with Head of Department to encourage staff to fill in the questionnaire or update it. We will tailor further activities to fit the situations of individual departments / workforces.

## Action Point 2:

We will continue to conduct an annual audit on the wage 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 from the audit.

### What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

Conduct an audit on the wage difference between men and women (gender pay gap) and undertake a gender-based pay audit (equal pay audit)

### What did we do?

The independent consultant has carried out substantial work on the pay audit and by March 2022 we had received a first draft of the report. The work of further analysing the data continues with the intention of receiving the final report during the summer. We will consider the content of the report after we receive it and take action in line with the findings if necessary.

## Action Point 3:

Work has also been ongoing as part of the Women in Leadership Project (one of the projects contained within 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 2021/22?

- Review the conditions and the working environment to ensure that we take the lead in encouraging Women in Leadership and identify and seek to remove any barriers that could prevent women from reaching leadership and management posts within the Council.
- Implement a work programme that includes introducing a programme to develop potential for women, carrying out an audit of our recruitment and appointment methods for managerial posts and creating a forum for female leaders and prospective leaders within the Council.

### What did we do?

- As part of our practice as an organisation to mark International Women's Day on March 8th, we launched the first series of the Women in Leadership Development Program this year. There were over 30 applications for the Program with 11 women from a cross section of departments and roles within the Council receiving a place. The feedback so far states that the program has been very useful to them and that they are benefiting from the experience. Some have even been promoted to senior positions during the program period.

- As well as internal experts we have also welcomed external speakers to be contributing to the Programme; Alys Carlton - who runs the Active Motivation company, Dr Hanna Hopwood, Presenter, and Marian Evans, a renowned businesswoman named as Inspirational Woman of the Decade.
- An audit of our recruitment and appointment methods is being led by the Human Resources Team with full consultation with the members of the Women in Leadership Group before amending individual working conditions. This procedure will continue into next year.
- The popular "Chats over a Cuppa" meetings for female Elected Members as well as staff have continued with external speakers invited to contribute as well as some of our current internal female leaders.
- An event was held for the men of the organization on the 28th of June

# Objective 5:

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

The Council is one of the county's largest employers. It is important, therefore, that we work towards ensuring that our workforce reflects the Gwynedd working age population as far as possible. The Cabinet has identified this as one of its main priorities. Having sufficient information about the protected characteristics of our workforce (See Objective 4) is essential when doing this work. It should be noted that we have no intention to undertake the work in an artificial manner. Rather, we will seek to highlight the opportunities available to people from various backgrounds, in order to ensure that we can attract the broadest possible range of applicants. This will provide us with assurance that we find the best person for every job in order to enable us to offer the best service consistently throughout the county and to meet the needs of our population.

Our intention in doing so is to ensure greater diversity of applicants for posts, which will lead to a workforce that reflects our population.

## **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 2021/22?**

This work is continuous but by 2021/22 we aimed to complete the public survey to identify the barriers facing the people of Gwynedd who have different characteristics (in accordance with Objective 2, Action Point 1).

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

The consultation with the workforce and the public was completed during the year. We have not yet had the opportunity to fully act on the findings. This will be done as we work with Inclusive Employers (see point 3 below) to improve our policies and ways of working in order to give the necessary attention to equality characteristics.

In order to gather more information, we have resolved to question those leaving Council employment whether they have experienced any obstacles. This system gives us the opportunity to gather the information continuously and it will lead to better data regarding employing trends. Earlier in the year, a pilot was undertaken in the Corporate Support Department. It is early days for that work but the hope is that it will help us better understand if there are obstacles that people face when working for the Council. We will move on to establish similar arrangements more widely across the Council during 2022/23.

## **Pwynt Gweithredu 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 2021/22?**

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

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

The problems caused by Covid-19, along with staffing problems, have continued to delay this work. However, the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network has decided to make work on diversity within employment a priority in moving forward and has re-established a sub-group. The sub-group will also consider whether there is a need to adapt the way this work will now be undertaken. The area of workforce planning is an area that receives wider attention within the Council and improving recruitment will develop to be an important part of the project.

## **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 2021/22?**

No specific work had been identified for this year.

### **Beth wnaethom ni?**

The work of attaining Level 2 is progressing. We have already identified what needs to be achieved in order to reach Level 2 of the scheme, with the stages encompassing the following themes:

- Seeking to influence other organisations to be confident in terms of disability
- Ensure that staff have access to dedicated training in the field
- Continue to take action to eliminate obstacles that may be preventing development in jobs for disabled staff
- Further develop the opportunities available for disabled staff to be able to provide feedback, by encouraging conversations between managers and staff but also by developing specific networks.
- Further develop how we recruit and appoint disabled staff

We continue to hold Level 1 accreditation of the Disability Confident Scheme, and are fully committed to reaching Level 2 as soon as practicable.

When researching the possibility of being a Stonewall Champion, it was decided that a slightly different and broader route should be followed in order to try to realise this objective. Our intention is to apply for Inclusive Employers accreditation, which will enable us to receive feedback on our work as an employer in the equality field, and ultimately to help us improve in the field. By following this route we will receive expert advice and feedback which will feed into a work plan for us as an employer. The process will start in late summer 2022.

# Information

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

## Staff Equality Details Monitoring

Because filling 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). 48% of the workforce had completed the questionnaire compared to 41.8% last year. The information about the equality characteristics of our workforce can be found in Appendix 1.

This will aim to identify and deal with any discrimination, harassment and victimisation, promoting equal opportunities and creating better relationships between people with specific protected characteristics and people without those characteristics.

## Complaints and concerns

The Equality Adviser advises on any complaint made on the grounds of a protected characteristic or equality duty. We also look for patterns annually which may enable us to identify and learn lessons. This ensures that we can identify and deal with any discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a specific characteristic and those who do not.

During 2021/22 we received 5 formal complaints against the Council's services and 2 about Healthy Living. 4 were on the basis of disability, 2 on the basis of race (ie nationality) and one on the basis of gender. The number of complaints was insufficient to recognize any pattern and every complainant has received a response. In addition, a number of comments have been received about the decision to raise a premium on holiday homes which also claim racism, on the basis of nationality, but they have not been noted in the numbers as they are talking about a decision that has been made by the Cabinet and are therefore not valid to be counted here. However, we need to recognise this pattern and see if action is needed to better explain the Council's position.

## 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 recognises and addresses this. We will use the information to complete impact assessments on our services which include the three aims of the general duty (i.e. to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations).

## 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 Welsh Government's *Is Wales Fairer?*. It shows that there is a lack of data available in some core fields on a county or regional level. It is likely that this partly derives from the low numbers. However, it contains useful information showing how the region or county compares with Wales as a whole in fields such as education, housing and socio-economic disadvantage. This information is available to draw up impact assessments that meet the three aims of the duty. This lack of information is at county level is something the Network will be looking at when moving forward, although there are no specific actions as yet.



# 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. It is important that everyone is aware of this in their day-to-day work. A fair amount of the Council's day-to-day work is also involved specifically with meeting the needs of people with protected characteristics and responding to the three general duties. Working with partners of all kinds has been central to this work.

Much of our work is also involved with socio-economic deprivation and it therefore meets the socio-economic duty.

Below are examples of our work under three parts of a specific public sector duty and the socio-economic duty, although much of the work encompasses more than one duty of course:

**a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.**

The Council has a number of employment policies to prohibit harassment and victimisation, 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. We also of course have procedures to ensure respect and dignity for our service users. The Equality and Inclusion Policy (see Objective 2) gives an outline of what needs to be done to ensure fairness for all.

The impact assessments that are made on changes to policies or projects help us to identify and mitigate potential unlawful discrimination. We have been working on a new method to complete them (see Objective 3 above).

**b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who do not.**

As part of a commitment to provide quality career opportunities for local people, in May 2021 the Cabinet resolved to invest £1.1 million in two innovative schemes that would give an opportunity for the county's residents to begin their career paths in their communities. The apprentice scheme, which is open to everyone 16 years and older, was extended for three years, and the seal of approval was given to an application to fund the extension of the Cynllun Yfory Scheme for Managers and Experts, which offer career start opportunities for graduates.



Two challenges were held for children and all young people in the libraries during the year. In July the summer Reading Challenge was launched in all libraries in Gwynedd to encourage children between 4 and 11 to visit. The Welsh Government's Winter Full of Wellbeing challenge was also held to encourage young people to share a book which had benefited their health and well-being. The campaign also organizes a series of events

for school classes such as art workshops, music and story session, movement and song. In addition, a grant was received to provide play sessions for vulnerable and disabled children. These included play sessions open and sensorial play, family activities by DERWEN, care and play sessions for vulnerable children, and play sessions in deprived areas - a total of 80+ sessions for free.

From the beginning of November 2021 onwards, Gwynedd Libraries in partnership with Gwynedd Council's Education Service, have offered free period products to Gwynedd residents. Anyone who needs period products are welcome to help themselves from any Library with a public toilet. The Library Service also offers free access to a variety of reusable period products for residents, and it is possible to order them either by phone, e-mail or on-line, with an option to collect the packs from their Library or get them delivered to their homes. The Free Period Products scheme offers a very good way for everyone to trial these products to see which ones work best for them. The aim of the Scheme is to tackle period poverty and to raise awareness of the environmental benefits of reusable products.

Gwynedd Council adopted an autism plan in December which will drive work in this crucial field for the next few years. The Council Cabinet has committed to support the plan, which will establish a children and adults' autism board, a training plan across the authority, along with the appointment of designated staff to drive the work forward. The Council was very eager to learn following a complaint submitted about services in the autism field. Therefore, an external specialist was commissioned to take a closer look at the services available by a number of agencies working in the field, in consultation with children, families and autistic people and partners such as the Health Board.



Gwynedd Council has retained the gold standard in the national 'Corporate Health Standard' accreditation. It is a national structure that is maintained by Welsh Government in order to promote and improve health and well-being in the workplace. It recognises good practices in terms of staff health and well-being and targets key matters regarding disorders that could be avoided, to ensure that staff are in the best place to continue to provide crucial services for county residents. The Council has consistently retained the standard since 2011. This year, there was

special recognition to the way the Council has adapted and kept the health and well-being provision going for staff throughout the pandemic, and protected staff with vulnerable health conditions by implementing stringent steps, and ensured that support was still available despite the different working circumstances.

Ysgol Pendalar and Ysgol Hafod Lon were the first special schools in Wales to secure the 'Elklan Communication Friendly Setting' status, namely an innovative way of working to help the pupils' communication skills. This followed two years of hard work with the staff of both schools receiving training and presenting the programme to pupils across Caernarfon and Penrhyndeudraeth. All types of communication are essential to ensure that all individuals within schools are heard. The programme is widely used in Gwynedd schools to support pupils with additional communication needs. The work is in partnership with the Speech and Language Therapy service with support from the local Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Service.

Dementia Actif Gwynedd held a number of events during the year. One of them was the 'Boccia is back!' competition for National Boccia Days in October. Boccia is a target game with players having to throw balls as closely as possible to the target. Due to Covid-19, it was not possible to bring teams together to compete, therefore, they competed from their individual setting or residential home, with the scores compared from different teams across Gwynedd. 92 players took part.





Staff from Gwynedd Council's Youth Service were recognised at the High Sheriff of Gwynedd's Annual Crimebeat Awards in March for their hard work and positivity when supporting young people aged between 11-25 to reach their full potential. The service is working very closely with the Police to tackle crime and has successfully received funding from the Police's PACT fund. They offer provision in communities across the county during the evening and during school holidays.

### **c. Foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who do not.**

Helping children to remain in their local communities can greatly benefit them. Not only does it keep them in contact with their friends, school and their sense of identity, but it also builds their confidence and reduces stress. Therefore, Gwynedd Council is part of a new bilingual advertising campaign that represents Gwynedd Council and the other 21 Local Authorities' non-profit fostering teams, that make up 'Foster Wales'. Its purpose is to increase the number of foster parents available to help children in their local area, when it is right for them.

In December, Dementia Actif Gwynedd contributed to a new website for, and by, people with dementia and their carers. The Living with Dementia Package website, produced by the University of Exeter and Innovations in Dementia, is full of ideas, suggestions and films to give hope to people to live with dementia. Dementia Actif Gwynedd has contributed towards the 'Staying Active' section. The co-ordinator, Emma Quaeck, made a presentation and took part, along with team members, Clare Harris and Lia Roberts, in a film talking about their work.

New sessions were launched in Sarn Mellteyrn and Blaenau Ffestiniog in order to bring older people together in the community to improve health and well-being. The sessions, which include light exercise and socialising over a cuppa, welcomes people of all abilities and they are inclusive to people who are affected by dementia and other health conditions. The aim is to improve strength, balance and stamina, and the trainer will tailor the exercises to suit an individual's situation.



Nefyn's Sporting Memories Club brings sports' fans together to talk and reminisce about all types of sports. It includes discussions on specific sport topics; quizzes, 'Spot the Ball' competitions and a few Boccia or New Age Curling games.

Gwynedd Council and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board have joined up with the Clwyd Alyn housing association in a new social care project to support people to return to live in their own homes. Cynllun Penyberth uses homes in the former Penrhos Polish village in Pen Llŷn to



enable people to leave hospital although they may not yet be ready to live in their own homes. The unit can provide a service for 12 people at a time. The aim is to support older or vulnerable people to develop skills, confidence and strength in order to return to their own homes. Staff employed by Gofal Seibiant are available on site and there is also access to a local GP. The scheme will help towards the problem of delay faced by a number of clients when leaving hospital, due to the shortage of care workers in our communities.

Gwynedd Council and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board are collaborating to establish a new domiciliary care model to help people to live their lives as fully as possible within their communities. By establishing local teams, domiciliary care, health and social care staff, along with GPs, will get to understand what really matters to people who need support to live at home. They will focus on the strengths of individuals and support them to start revisiting their social circles and live as independently as possible. This will replace the traditional method, which tended to focus on completing particular tasks at specific times, without the flexibility to discuss and understand what people really needed. Every local team will work for specific domiciliary care providers in their area, to facilitate a response to the needs of the community.



Gwynedd Council's bridging the generations project aims to create new links between children and people of all ages. This will increase respect and understanding between the generations and lead to stronger communities. The project is working with people of all ages and backgrounds by offering opportunities to get to know people across the county. During the lockdown periods they have had a pen-pals plan which has led to 150 pairs corresponding to get to know each other and to challenge loneliness and isolation. Face to face projects have now restarted and the project is proud to restart the work of bringing people together.



Age Friendly Gwynedd is a new work program for Gwynedd and since December 2021 they have funded 59 projects in order to increase the confidence of older individuals as they regain their grip on their social lives. The work program has tackled loneliness, isolation and is an opportunity to hear the voices of older people and to move forward as part of the Covid-19 recovery. Regular meetings are held in the 5 areas - Caernarfon, Bangor, South Meirionnydd, Eifionydd and North Meirionnydd and Llŷn to ensure that we continue to support and hear the voices of older people.

As a response to the situation in Afghanistan, Gwynedd Council worked hard behind the scenes to offer homes for refugees from the country. The Council has a team of staff that co-ordinates this work and collaborates with the refugees by providing support for them to

be able to resettle. As part of the work, the Council has been working closely with the Pobol i Bobl organisation. Pobol i Bobl helps people in crisis by providing assistance and personal support, regardless of their race, religion or location. In addition, from the end of March, the Council proceeded to establish arrangements to welcome and support Ukrainian refugees by collaborating with Clwyd Alyn Housing Association and Welsh Government to open a Welcome Centre in the county, and also to support Gwynedd residents who had offered to accommodate refugees under the Homes for Ukraine Programme.

Gwynedd Council has a structure to ensure that we pay attention to and support a number of days, weeks and months promoting different features of equality all year e.g. International



Women's Day, LGBT+ History Month, Carers' Week. Another was the 2021 Black History Month in October. Gwynedd Council was pleased to support the North Wales African Society (NWAS) award ceremony, which honoured those who have helped others in their local community in a difficult period. They are a collective group of people of African origin and people who have an interest in Africa. The awards ceremony held at Bangor applauded people who have gone above and beyond to help

others during the pandemic. People had delivered food, organised children's activities, helped tackle the problem of loneliness and social isolation and encouraged people to get their vaccinations. Councillor Elwyn Jones, Gwynedd Council Deputy Chair, attended the ceremony and presented an award.

## ch. The Socio-economic Duty

In July, Gwynedd Council decided to scrap charges for books that are returned late to the county's libraries, as has already been happening with books for children and young people under the age of 18 for many years. During the pandemic, a decision was taken to automatically extend return dates, which meant that books could never be late. When this comes to an end, users will not be penalised for books that are returned late. This is in order to ensure that there is no barrier from making the most of the libraries. Any existing fines will be erased, giving everyone a clean slate.



Recently, a commitment was made to invest £77 million in the county's Housing Plan, to implement the vision of housing local people in their communities, in suitable, green and affordable homes. As a result, there were many schemes in the housing field during 2021-22 to meet the housing crisis that may destroy communities, the way of life and the future of children in the area. Firstly, a grant scheme was launched to renovate empty houses, in order to increase opportunities for people to have an affordable home within their community. The grant of up to £15,000 will be for first time buyers with a local connection to the area where the house is located in order to support them to renovate the empty houses to bring them to an acceptable living standard. It will also deal with the problem of empty houses and bring them back into the market.

The First Time Buyers Empty Homes Grant Scheme was awarded the Chartered Institute of Housing's 2021 award for Supporting Future Generations in Wales in October. Gwynedd and Anglesey have been collaborating to deliver the £2.5 million scheme since 2018, although their schemes are slightly different, and both counties won the award. They have helped 155 first time buyers by utilising funding from the Second Homes Council Tax Premium and Welsh Government regeneration funds. The scheme has also been funded by Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Programme.

In September, £1 million was prioritised for the Homebuy Scheme in Gwynedd, which is administered by 'Tai Teg' on behalf of County Councils and the Snowdonia National Park. It is an equity loan scheme, which provides a loan of between 30% and 50% of the price of a house on the open market, with the buyer financing the remainder through a mortgage and savings. It will help people to own a home locally when they could not otherwise afford to buy a house for the first time, or live in an unsuitable house.



Also, for the first time in 30 years, Gwynedd Council has started to build houses that will be quality modern homes for county residents to buy on the basis of shared-equity or affordable rent. Through the 'Tŷ Gwynedd' scheme, the Council has set an ambition to build 100 new homes across the county over the coming years. The aim of the scheme is to offer intermediate affordable homes to the many local people who are unable

to buy or rent a house on the open market and who do not qualify for social housing.

Gwynedd Council, along with a number of partners have been working to bring affordable, effective and low carbon heating to Tanygrisiau. A consultation was carried out through a questionnaire to assess current energy consumption in order to find out the best option for low carbon and affordable heat. An event was also held in April to offer help and answer questions about the ash field. This included sharing information about grants available for boilers and home insulation via Nyth and ECO, how to reduce bills, heat homes better and reduce carbon footprint.



The Council and the Health Board established Support Hubs in Communities with Community Groups and Voluntary Agencies and ran them in 9 hubs in communities to support people and their needs. It was intended to create a local front door services, with many supporting people with matters such as access to food, financial advice, advice on living costs, well-being activities, accommodation advice, support to work and parenting.