



Equality Annual Report

2019/20

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Purpose of the Report

In March 2016, the Council published its Strategic Equality Plan for the period of 2016-20 in order to reduce inequality between people who have equality characteristics and the rest of society. Those characteristics are:

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Gender
- Race (including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality)
- Disability
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sexual orientation
- Religion or belief - including non-belief
- Marriage and civil partnership

(Equality Act 2010)

In the Strategic Equality Plan, the Council noted four objectives to work towards over the next four years. An additional objective was added to the 2018-2019 Annual Report as local evidence showed that it is something that requires further work.

- Improve our arrangements to discover and use the opinion of people who share equality characteristics
- Improve our equality impact assessment arrangements
- Create circumstances for people from different backgrounds to represent the people of Gwynedd by standing in an election to become an elected member
- To identify any employment and pay inequalities and to take action to reduce them.
- Improve our information provision for people who do not use Welsh or English as a first language or require documents in a different format (added in the 2018-19 Annual Report).

Clearly, the intention of the Annual Report is to note what has been done during the year in question. However, this time, this Report as the last one for the 2016-20 Equality Plan, looks back on the work that has been achieved on the Objectives during the lifespan of the Plan. It also identifies the relationship with the 2020-24 Plan.

Lockdown as a result of Covid-19 was imposed during the last two week period of the plan. Therefore, it was not an influential factor on the action plan. Of course, it will have an impact on the 2020-24 Plan and it is necessary to look carefully at our Objectives and our Action Plans and revise them as required.

Action Plan

Objective 1

Improve our arrangements to discover and use the opinion of people who share Equality characteristics



What did the Council promise to do during 2016-20?

What is the timescale?

1.1 Strengthen the Council's link to specific groups and establish an equality core group. Share the information that comes from the group throughout the Council.

2016-17

1.2 Share information from opinion poll exercises on the Council's intranet so that it is available to all. (Further consideration to be given to finding the best method)

Ongoing

1.3 Strengthen the equality element in the Engagement Handbook based on good practice to ensure that the services are reminded of the benefit that comes from receiving the views of people with equality characteristics as well as the duty to do so.

2016-17

What has happened during 2019-20?

1.1 The action point was completed during 2016-20. The Equality Core Group continued to meet during 2019-20 focussing on giving an input into the 2020-24 Equality Plan and the Action Plan. This has allowed us to identify obstacles and information that we would otherwise not have identified to be addressed in the Plan or vice versa.

1.2 Information shared on the Council's intranet which is used to improve decisions by informing our equality impact assessments.

1.3 Completed in 2016-17.

What happened during the period of the Plan and what is the relationship with the 2020-24 Strategic Equality Plan?

1.1 A Core Equality Group was established, which includes representatives of organisations that support different equality characteristics, in order to provide a specialist input to the Council's work. Their main task was to provide input to the Equality Officer on various parts of her work, e.g. information on the intranet, equality impact assessment procedure and the new Strategic Equality Plan. Their work continues to the next stage with the hope of extending, strengthening and using their expertise when implementing the objectives. Having said this, our intention is to extend the range of opinion we receive, including people who do not usually participate in such groups, or even Council consultations. This is in order to get a full picture of people's aspirations in order to improve our services (Objective 1 of the new Plan).

1.2 The main information was shared but we are aware that there is a need to continue to improve our arrangements and to make them more accessible for the services. This will enable us to provide more robust equality impact assessments in order to ensure better decisions. It is also intended to avoid duplication, which leads to contributors getting fed up with the process (Objective 2 of the new Plan).

1.3 The handbook was changed in 2017-18 in order to encourage managers to consider the needs of people with various protected characteristics to improve everyone's chance to have a voice. The Engagement Team has been proactive during the period to ensure various input within engagements and consultations. Considering the type of advice provided to staff will be an inevitable part of the response to the engagement with the public and staff in the new Plan (Objective 2).

Objective 2 Improve our equality impact assessment arrangements		
What did the Council promise to do during 2016-20?	What is the timescale?	
2.1 Give assistance and training to officers to ensure they have information about their duty towards people with equality characteristics. This should include ensuring that impact assessments are a part of the development of any policy, project or procedure before any decisions are made.	Ongoing	
2.2 Ensure that messages that come from seeking input from groups and individuals with protected characteristics are shared throughout the Council so that they can be included in impact assessments.	Ongoing	
What has happened during 2019-20?		
2.1. The Policy and Equality Officer has continued to educate officers regarding the duties in other ways, by talking with individuals, attending group meetings and management teams. Staff have appreciated this and have said that they better understand how to consider the rights of people with protected characteristics. Unfortunately, the number of staff who completed the equality e-module was low during the year; therefore, we will examine how we provide training in the field. 2.2 The Policy and Equality Officer has encouraged officers, when providing them with support to undertake the assessments, to use various resources as information when completing equality assessments in order to improve the outcome.		
What happened during the period of the Plan and what is the relationship with the 2020-24 Strategic Equality Plan?		
2.1 Our impact assessment arrangements have been strengthened during the four years by refining the guidelines and ensuring an understanding of the need, which has led to more assessments being submitted to the Policy and Equality Officer. We have particularly strengthened our intentions regarding setting the Council's budget in a difficult period. Of course, this work is		

continuous and Objective 3 in the new Plan is involved with improving our Equality Impact Assessment procedure. It was recognised that our training in the field needed to be revisited and Objective 1 is involved with the provision of various suitable high quality training using a variety of methods.

2.2. The information has been used as evidence when undertaking impact assessments but more work is needed to encourage this. Identifying and providing various methods of sharing the information from engagements and consultations that are suitable for officers and lead to ensuring good decisions appear in Objective 2 and 3 of the new Equality Plan.

Objective 3

Create the circumstances for people from different backgrounds to represent the people of Gwynedd by standing in an election to become an elected member.



What will Council do during 2016-20?

What is the timescale?

3.1 Conduct a local survey to identify the elements that prevent individuals from standing in an election to become a local councillor.

2016/17 –
2017-18

3.2 Act (where possible) on the outcome of the above to remove obstacles.

2016/17 –
2017-18

3.3 Various methods to raise the awareness of the people of Gwynedd about democracy and the opportunities to represent them as a local councillor.

2016/17 –
2017-18

What has happened during 2019-20?

3.1 Completed during 2016/17 - 2017-18

3.2 Completed during 2016/17 – 2017-18

3.1 Completed during 2016/17 – 2017-18

What happened during the period of the Plan and what is the relationship with the 2020-24 Strategic Equality Plan?

Action plan 3 was implemented at the beginning of the Plan period before the 2017 Local Government Elections. It is difficult to identify whether or not the work has come to fruition as it is illegal for us to ask about the protected characteristics of those who stand in an election but we have certainly identified that it is long-term work. One of the lessons learnt was that sufficient preparation in advance is required so that it is possible to engage with community groups about a year or two before an election, rather than a few months before. Therefore, we have already started to think about promoting diversity for the next electoral cycle and in the longer term in the future. This will be addressed as part of the long-term day-to-day work of the Democracy Service.

Objective 4

To identify any employment and pay inequalities and to take action to reduce them.



What will the Council do during 2016-20?	What is the timescale?
4.1 A campaign to fill in gaps in the equality characteristics data	Commenced in June 2016
4.2 Complete a pay audit	2016/17 – 2019/20.
4.3 Act based on the evidence from the pay audit and any other relevant information	2016/17 – 2019/20
What happened during 2019-20?	
4.1 The number of staff members who have completed the new questionnaire (changed in 2017-18) remains low, although work was undertaken to encourage staff to complete it as they started using the self-service system. 4.2 Already completed (2016-17) 4.3 Improvement Priority 3 in the Council's Plan, namely Reducing Inequality in the County, includes the Women in Leadership project. The project promotes the number of women who apply for and attain higher positions within the Council by reviewing work conditions and the work environment. The Council recognises that the number of women who have a managerial role within the Council is disproportionate with the split within the entire workforce i.e. 70% are women and 30% are men, although the recent pay audit indicated that there are no equal pay gaps.	
What happened during the period of the Plan and what is the relationship with the 2020-24 Strategic Equality Plan?	
4.1 Our staff monitoring questionnaire was dated and did not ask the correct questions regarding some characteristics, especially religion. A new	

questionnaire that responds better to the need is now live. Various messages were published stressing the need for this to be completed to get worthwhile figures to act upon, although of course the Council does not have the right to demand a response. Under the circumstances, it is inevitable that the number completed thus far is significantly lower than the last one. Having said that, it must be borne in mind that the information we gather now meets our duty under the Equality Act 2010 much better. Promoting the questionnaire in order to receive better figures in the new Plan (Objective 4). The engagement (Objective 2) will also provide us with information on obstacles and provide evidence on how to act further to improve the diversity of our workforce.

4.2 The pay audit was completed, which indicated that there were no equal pay gaps between men and women on the Council's salary structure. At the time, it was recognised that it could be beneficial for the Council to undertake a pay audit on some of the other protected characteristics (such as a disability or race). This was not possible at the time as a result of data quality, but it is hoped that the ability to undertake such an audit could be developed during the period of the new Equality Plan (Objective 4).

4.3 The Women in Leadership project has been established, see above. Acting on the findings continue to be crucial in order to strengthen the diversity of our workforce and appears under Objective 4 of the new Plan.

Objective 5

Improve our information provision for people who do not use Welsh or English as a first language or require documents in a different format.



What will the Council do during 2016-20 (this Objective was added in 2018-19)?

What is the timescale?

5.1 Engage with the Equality Core Group and other relevant groups to identify the greatest need

continuous

5.2 Act on what is said, if possible

continuous

What happened during 2019-20?

5.1 We have identified the need to provide information in an easy to read format and have acted on this. Further work is required in order to identify and confirm the scale of the need for various other communication methods within the county.

5.2 Further work is required in order to identify the fields that need action

What happened during the period of the Plan and what is the relationship with the 2020-24 Strategic Equality Plan?

5.1 A considerable amount of research was undertaken in order to identify different methods and to examine specific needs within the county but the picture remains unclear. Although there is no specific Objective in the new plan about this subject, it is expected that we will collect information to fill the gap with the consultation held in Objective 2.

5.2 It was not possible to undertake a lot of strategic action in this field due to a lack of information; however, the engagement work in the new Plan will be a starting point for us to ensure a suitable provision for the residents of Gwynedd.

Has the Council done anything else?

As each one of us possesses at least 5 protected characteristics, every part of the Council's work contributes towards well-being based on equality.

However, a fair amount of the Council's day-to-day work is also involved with meeting the needs of people with specific protected characteristics. See below some examples of what the Council, usually in partnership with other organisations, has done to promote equal opportunities or to promote a better understanding between people with a specific characteristic and people who do not share this characteristic.



An exhibition by Merched Chwarel was held at Storiol, Bangor, in May. Their work was influenced by north Wales quarries and they examine the real presence of women in an environment that was a masculine domain. The artists held talks as part of the exhibition. (Protected characteristic:

Gender - women)

Some pupils from Ysgol Nefyn went on a special Easter egg hunt at the Plas Hafan Residential Home as part of Gwynedd Council and Bangor University's Bridging the Generations project. (Protected characteristic: Age, promoting a good relationship between generations)



Gwynedd Council launched a new Menopause Policy for staff on World Menopause Day (18 October). As more than two thirds of Council staff are women, it is a source of pride for the authority to be able to break this new mould. (Protected characteristic: Gender - women)

A Gwynedd Council Residential Homes' Sports Day was held on a joint basis with DementiaGo in October. The teams, which included staff and residents from the areas of Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionnydd, took part in a number of sports including Boccia, skittles and walking during the week.



Eight members of the Friends of Penygroes group collaborated with some year 4 pupils from Ysgol Bro Lleu during the summer in a campaign to dispose of litter and to draw attention to this problem in the community. (Protected characteristic - Age, promoting a good relationship between generations)

The 'Be nawn ni heddiw' scheme was started in Dyffryn Nantlle to hold various activities with an emphasis on people who find it difficult to leave the house. The 'O Ddrws i Ddrws' bus transports the residents to and from the activity. Financial sponsorship from Gwynedd Council's 'Integrated Care Fund' means that the cost is low for the individual. The Cymydmaen Cyf. company runs a similar successful scheme in Pen Llŷn. (Protected characteristic: Age - older people, Disability, promotes good relationships within the community)



Gwynedd Council launched a 'Looking after someone?' booklet at the Annual Gwynedd Older People's Conference in November. It brings together useful information and details about the available services and support for carers. The aim is to help carers to cope with their responsibilities and it includes a range of useful information (Protected characteristic: Age - older people, Disability - carers)

Some of Gwynedd's youth workers and Byw'n Iach staff assisted the Barmouth Community Club to hold a successful bingo night, with the help of the local PCSO and local businesses. Over £835 was collected towards the 'Josh's Lighthouse Project', which raises awareness of self-harm and suicide among young people. Josh's family was there on the night to support the event. Barclays Bank will contribute match funding and will donate it to the Gwynedd and Anglesey Mind charity, which promotes better mental health and well-being for all. In addition, those who were organising the event were given the opportunity to complete the Agored Cymru Teamwork accreditation. (Protected characteristic: Age - young people)



In November, the Galwch Acw shop was opened in Caernarfon by the Learning Disability Service. It combines employment and training opportunities for adults with learning disabilities with a message about the importance of sustainable living. It sells upcycled and hand-made goods. It is also intended to develop a community centre to help reduce loneliness within society. Galwch Acw was selected to take part in the S4C programme, Prosiect Pum Mil. The television company gave the scheme £5,000 and filmed the people behind the initiative along with a number of volunteers as they restored the shop. (Protected characteristic - disability)

In order to address a huge increase of 575% in homelessness cases over the last 20 years, the Youth Services have commissioned GISDA to try to reach young people before they become homeless. Young 16-24 year old adults will be given access to proactive sessions in schools, and youth and community projects. The sessions will provide a snapshot of the bleak reality of life as a homeless person, the reasons why people are homeless, along with some of the life skills required, such as how to live on a budget. The aim is to raise awareness of the support available to those in crisis, in an attempt to encourage young people to ask for help sooner. (Protected characteristic: Age - young people)





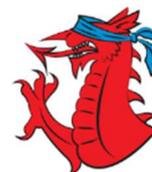
The Council has undertaken upgrading work valued at £120,000 at Plas Hedd, Bangor. Part of the home has been adapted to create a suitable unit to provide specialist support for up to seven people with dementia. It includes a 'respite room', which means that users can come in for up to a fortnight in order to provide respite for their families. The Aber Unit will ensure dedicated provision for people who live with dementia in the area and ensure specialist care as close as possible to their families (Protected characteristic: Disability)

In February 2020, the Frân Wen Theatre Company worked with young people who have resettled in Gwynedd from Syria. The theme of the event was Fi di Fi ('I am Me') and they used the arts to encourage an understanding of the importance of well-being. The young people provided a short film, which discussed some of the things that mattered to them. (Protected characteristics: Race, Age – young people)



The Council has provided a £2000 grant to GISDA to fund a Co-ordinator for the LGBT+ Club to ensure its prosperity. The group gives a valuable opportunity for young Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people to meet and socialise with like-minded people. Additionally, it works with other local initiatives and organisations to offer opportunities in creative and artistic fields. These activities are a very useful consultation tool, a good forum to share feelings in an artistic manner and are activities that give members a lot of enjoyment. (Protected characteristics: Sexual Orientation, Gender Reassignment)

The Council promoted a number of national or international days, e.g. World Anti-Slavery Day on 18 October.



Further information

Complaints and Concerns

Three official complaints were received during the year.

- a) A complaint from a traveller about the handling of racism with regards to a planning application. It was responded with the explanation that there were no grounds for the complaint.
- b) A complaint from a wheelchair user regarding access to a polling station. It was responded with an apology explaining that the usual location was unavailable and that lessons would be learnt.
- c) A complaint on behalf of a blind person about bins always being left in a different place after being emptied. It was apologised and promised to be more careful when returning the bins.

Equality Information

See appendix 2 for Council staff monitoring figures

Unfortunately, the number of staff members who have completed the new form has not sufficiently increased. A campaign to encourage completion of the form is an important part of Objective 4 in the new Strategic Equality Plan. It is necessary to have as many staff members as possible to complete the questionnaire in order to be able to act properly on any arising matters.