

Equality and Inclusion Policy

Introduction

Gwynedd Council has identified ensuring fairness for all as a priority. It also prioritises addressing poverty. These two priorities relate closely to each other because people who have certain specific equality characteristics tend to be statistically poorer than those who do not have that characteristic. For example, a family with a disabled member would, on average, be poorer than a similar family without a disabled member. The aim of this policy is to outline some of the steps that need to be taken in order to act on these priorities.

There is also a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to reduce inequality between people who share protected characteristics and people without those characteristics. The protected characteristics are:

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

(Equality Act 2010)

The socio-economic duty of the Equality Act 2010 was implemented in Wales on 1st April 2021. When making strategic decisions, relevant public bodies are required to give due attention to the need to reduce inequalities in terms of outcomes arising from socio-economic disadvantage. This means not only improving everyone's situation, but also taking specific action to reduce the gap between socially and economically disadvantaged communities and individuals and the rest of society.

Part A – Commitment

1. To promote equality in accordance with the duties of the Equality Act 2010 (the general duties and the Wales specific duties)

1.1 The Council will give due regard to the eradication of discrimination, harassment and persecution, be it against service users, members of staff or

members of the wider community. We commit to do so in our day-to-day work, and in changing any policies or procedures.

- 1.2 The Council is working to develop an awareness of the needs of specific groups and individuals in order to promote equal opportunity and eradicate, or reduce, any disadvantages people may experience in relation to their equality characteristic. This means satisfying the needs of people from protected groups where these are different to those of other groups. Where their participation is disproportionately low, we also encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life.
- 1.3 Gwynedd Council welcomes its responsibility to promote good relations between the various communities and groups of people who have protected characteristics, tackling discrimination and promoting understanding. This can include taking steps to satisfy the needs of people from equality groups where these are different to other people's needs. This could also mean treating some groups more favourably than others, provided that this does not contradict other provisions within the Act.
- 1.4 In addition, the Council is acting in accordance with the specific duty to produce and publish a Strategic Equality Plan every four years, including objectives for that period, with an objective relating to pay difference every time. There is also an action plan that outlines the specific work the Council plans to undertake during this period to promote equality. A financial report will be published annually to report on progress.
- 1.5 Relevant equality information will be gathered in order to steer our work, which will occasionally be published. The equality characteristics details of our workforce are published annually.
- 1.6 Please see below for the Council's intentions in terms of engagement, impact assessment, training and procurement, which are also specific duties.

2. **Implementing the socio-economic duty**

- 2.1 The definition of socio-economic disadvantage is living in less favourable social and economic circumstances than others within the same society. It is not limited to financial poverty. Research shows that there is a higher risk of disadvantage in rural areas if access to services is included when measuring poverty.

- 2.2. When acting in response to this duty, it is important to consider groups who have common experience. For example, this can include people who have been homeless or those who have experience of one of the Council's services. People who share one or more of the protected characteristics would also be a community of interest.
- 2.3 Consideration must also be given to communities of place; people who share a connection due to where they live, work, visit or spend a considerable amount of time for other reasons. Socio-economic disadvantage has no respect for urban-rural boundaries, and many aspects of daily life can intensify that disadvantage. It is important to consider hidden poverty in smaller communities. Living costs and access to transport, education and employment can have a greater negative impact on rural populations.
- 2.4 It is important to give attention to intersectionality when considering the above. This means the way factors such as gender, race, sexuality, disability and class intersect and lead to additional disadvantages e.g. a young black woman would experience any disadvantage that women, black and minority people and young people experience in any given situation.
- 2.5 What matters here is reducing inequality of outcomes. This means the measurable differences between the outcomes for those who have experienced socio-economic disadvantage and those of the rest of the population. It is important that we as an organisation use data and the voice of residents to identify where we can have the greatest positive impact.
- 2.6 We will use our Equality Impact Assessment procedure to identify the socio-economic impacts of our strategic decisions. This will allow us to identify evidence and improve our policies and procedures, and to give decision makers the information to ensure that due attention is given to socio-economic disadvantage.

3. Responsibility for acting on our equality duty

- 3.1 The Council Cabinet has prioritised equality and has nominated a lead member for the field. Members have a duty to ensure that equality is embedded throughout the democratic process, by ensuring that these issues are given due consideration.
- 3.2 It is the responsibility of all departments and services to identify any factors that affect people or groups who have one or more equality characteristics, and to act accordingly, in their day to day work or when making changes to policies or services. They must also consider socio-economic disadvantage in

strategic matters. This includes undertaking an equality impact assessment (see point 4) when making relevant changes.

- 3.3 Above all else, however, the Council's expectation is that staff members should treat their colleagues and the public with respect and dignity. This includes ensuring that every individual is treated according to his or her needs. Staff have a responsibility for educating themselves about equality and undertaking suitable training.

Part B – Actions

4. Impact Assessment, Collaboration and Consultation

- 4.1 The best way of removing or reducing obstacles for people who have different protected characteristics is to ask for their views on the nature of any obstacles and how to get rid of them. It is of vital importance to gather a wide range of views from people when making changes to policies or services that will affect them.
- 4.2 It is also important to obtain quantitative evidence, such as statistics, guidance and local and national data etc., in order to make decisions about changes.
- 4.3 This evidence will need to be used to satisfy the Council's duty to undertake Equality Impact Assessments. Undertaking a Composite Equality Impact Assessment must be considered every time there is a change in policy or service, when a policy or service is terminated, or when a new one is created. If this change has an impact on the people of Gwynedd or staff members, it is essential that a full assessment is undertaken.
- 4.4 It is important to remember that undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment is a central part of creating or changing a policy or service, and is not a separate process. Its aim is to provide assistance to ensure that the change in policy/service is suitable, effective and sustainable. It will also be a record of the efforts made to reduce or mitigate any negative impacts that could arise because of the change. It is therefore very important that it is completed in a timely manner. Further information on undertaking an impact assessment is available on the intranet page [here](#).
- 4.5 The Council recognises the need to learn and evolve. There is a need to react positively to any failure and criticism, and learn from any mistakes.

5. Respect and Dignity towards our service users

- 5.1 The Council is committed to treating every Gwynedd citizen with the same respect and dignity, regardless of their background, need or equality characteristics.
- 5.2 Everyone must play their part to eliminate the obstacles that prevent disabled people, whatever their impairment, from playing a full role in society and effectively receiving Council services. This means that the Council acts in accordance with the Social Model of Disability.
- 5.3 The Council believes that transsexual / transgender individuals have the right to equal treatment, to be protected from discrimination, and to receive full support from the Council. The Council acknowledges that there are differences between biological gender and gender identity. The Council will not discriminate against individuals on a transsexual, transgender or intersex basis or any gender reassignment process, that has commenced or been completed.
- 5.4 The Council acknowledges British Sign Language as one of the languages of Wales.
- 5.5 In addition, the Council acknowledges that travellers, such as Gypsies and Irish travellers, Roma and New Travellers find it difficult to gain access to services for numerous complex reasons. The Council intends to identify these obstacles and act on them. We are also aware that members of the community are very vulnerable to race crimes.
- 5.6 Every member of staff is responsible for ensuring that they do not discriminate against anyone - other staff members, service users or other members of the public. There is no place for stereotyping or prejudice against any individual or group.
- 5.7 The way in which a member of staff speaks to someone, and the terminology used, is of vital importance to ensure respect and dignity.
- 5.8 All members of staff and elected members are expected to undertake the equality training provided for them by the Council.
- 5.9 Photographs used by the Council on the internet and in its information leaflets should show positive images of people with equality characteristics.

- 5.10 The Council has a duty to encourage people from different backgrounds, and with different equality characteristics, to stand in local elections and to participate in public life in general.

6. Access to Information

- 6.1 The Council recognises that preparing information that is easy for everyone to understand provides access for people to Council services. We aim to provide information in a simple, understandable way and in relevant formats to satisfy the requirements of people, according to their needs.
- 6.2 Any document for the public should be in clear Welsh and English, i.e. day-to-day language rather than corporate language, and it should not contain jargon and abbreviations. It should be in Arial or a similar font of at least 12 points (but ideally 14). Care should also be taken in choosing colour and background to ensure that the information is easy for everyone to read.
- 6.3 Every individual service within the Council has a responsibility to provide documents in accordance with individuals' needs e.g. British Sign Language (BSL), large print, audio, easy read etc.
- 6.4 It is important that the Council remembers that there are people living in Gwynedd who do not speak Welsh or English as their first language. Their needs must also be considered when preparing information, either by translating documents as required or by using different methods of communication.
- 6.5 We aim to use professional interpreters and translators at all times. This ensures quality that allows you to be confident that everyone understands each other. It also ensures confidentiality and dignity in meetings and documents that address sensitive issues.
- 6.6 Ensuring that all members of the public have access to our democracy arrangements, that is to see and hear committee discussions and decisions, is also vitally important. As the geographical area is wide, it is necessary to modify our historic arrangements of offering public access only in the chamber, usually in Caernarfon. The Council will continue to explore various ways for the public to have access to the discussions, particularly through the medium of webcasting or other electronic arrangements. This of course extends our current provision and is more accessible and convenient for everyone. This will go hand in hand with facilitating arrangements for Members when attending the meetings.

- 6.7 Anyone who arranges a meeting, a public meeting or event must provide additional support, such as communication support (loop, PA equipment, British Sign Language interpreter, Palantypist, notary, advocacy, etc.) as required. If possible, it is important to ask those attending what type of support they require.
- 6.8 We will continuously improve accessibility on the Council website (www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru) and endeavour to attain AA standard (WAI) wherever possible. We will continually improve accessibility on the Council's website (www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru) and strive to reach AA standard Web Content [Accessibility Guidelines version 2.1 \(external link\)](#) wherever possible.

7. Service Provision

- 7.1 Gwynedd Council puts the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do and endeavours to provide the best possible service for our citizens. The main purpose of the document is to ensure that everyone's needs are taken into account whatever their protected characteristics and the barriers they face.
- 7.2 The Council acknowledges and accepts its responsibility for services to be provided in a consistent and fair manner by staff who are trained and who act in accordance with good practice guidance in the equality field.
- 7.3 We will endeavour to facilitate access to services by identifying, and where possible avoiding, any obstacles; be they physical, cultural, or relating to perception and lack of information.
- 7.4 We will improve our services by encouraging timely participation from our users who have various protected characteristics, and including the views of service users when starting or amending arrangements.
- 7.5 We will carefully consider any complaints and allegations of discrimination and respond thoroughly and promptly in accordance with the Council's Complaints Procedure.
- 7.6 If the Council provides services in buildings that they do not own, they must make sure that access is suitable for everyone.
- 7.7 The Council is taking steps to ensure that its staff, contractors, organisations and partners who provide services on behalf of the Council are aware of their duty to operate on the basis of equality. We will include any necessary equality considerations as we draw up a specification for awarding contracts.

We will also monitor the arrangements of any contract to ensure that equality and inclusivity matters are respected.

8. Council Buildings and Property

- 8.1 Council property includes a wide variety of buildings and other locations, including offices, schools, leisure centres, libraries, car parks, recycling centres etc.
- 8.2 The Council must provide access that ensures that all customers can receive an equal service, independently, without having to depend on other people for support if it is reasonably possible. Where this is not possible, the Council will seek other appropriate ways of offering a service.
- 8.3 When considering a building's accessibility, consideration must be given to the needs of a varying range of individuals. It is also important to remember that adaptations made for one group may help another group e.g. ensuring appropriate physical access for wheelchair users would also ensure access for families with prams. Although physical access is important, we will also consider other needs e.g. loop for people with hearing impairments, signage that is easily understandable for a range of people, colour contrast for people who are partially blind etc.
- 8.5 All new buildings will be designed in order to provide equal access and facilities for all, and the process will include a consultation with users.
- 8.6 Any improvements or repairs undertaken by the Council on its buildings will include work to improve access, looking specifically at access, toilet facilities, changing places, communication methods etc., again, with appropriate consultation.
- 8.7 The Council will regularly check that its buildings, especially those used by the public, such as Siopau Gwynedd, remain suitable and as accessible as possible. It is important to maintain any equipment or improvement that is provided, e.g. loop systems, ramps, dropped kerbs etc.
- 8.8 Alternative arrangements must be made when considering evacuation of the building in an emergency. This will form a part of risk assessment arrangements and formal risk management. Any arrangements should, as far as possible, maintain the dignity of individuals and awareness of the arrangements should be raised.

- 8.9 The Council provides public car parks throughout the county. Sufficient accessible parking spaces should be provided for blue badge holders, in accordance with legislation. The Council will also act on health and safety matters by ensuring suitable lighting and dealing with plant overgrowth and other matters that affect accessibility. We will consider any other needs that are brought to our attention.
- 8.10 The Council ensures that it provides accessible parking spaces for disabled people in its staff car parks, in accordance with legislation. We also consider any other matters, as noted in 8.9.

9. Infrastructure and Planning Applications

- 9.1 The Management and Development Manual (May 2017) outlines when a Design and Access Statement (DAS) needs to be submitted with planning applications. Among other issues, the DAS submitted with a planning application must explain the access policy or approach adopted, and how access policies have been addressed in the development plan and also explain how specific issues that may affect access to the development have been addressed.
- 9.2 The Building Control department acts to ensure compliance with the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations. Developers are required to make a reasonable provision in terms of access and general use of the buildings, facilities and hygiene equipment in domestic and commercial buildings.
- 9.3 The Council will take reasonable steps to ensure that all work undertaken on pedestrian areas - new areas or areas that are being upgraded - is designed to meet everyone's needs, giving special consideration to lighting and access.
- 9.4 We will ensure that information, e.g. signs, notices etc. are clear, bilingual and installed in convenient spots.
- 9.5 We will continue to ensure that all street and road work is safe and that drivers and pedestrians are notified well in advance regarding the nature of any obstacles. Specific attention will be paid to the needs of disabled people.
- 9.6 In addition, the Council will assess any other needs relating to infrastructure work e.g. dropped kerbs and crossings. It will also ensure safety for all by maintaining infrastructure and will seek to incorporate these features into the infrastructure if reasonably practicable to do so.

- 9.7 The Council will also ensure the safety of everyone by undertaking inspections and maintaining the infrastructure to the appropriate standard.

10. Public Transport

- 10.1 The Council will make every reasonable attempt to ensure that all new public transport systems in the county are convenient and accessible for all members of the community.
- 10.2 It will use all available powers, namely licences etc., to ensure that those who provide a transport service, whether a bus or a taxi, are fully aware of the additional needs of some groups and that reasonable provision is made for them by including the requirements in the Conditions of Contract, and monitoring those requirements.
- 10.3 We will work to ensure that everyone, whatever their communication needs, are informed about the services available to them (see above). This is in accordance with the Voluntary Welsh Bus Quality Standard 2016, which aims to increase the use of features such as audio-visual systems announcing the next bus stop, and accessible information from the timetabling service.
- 10.4 The Voluntary Welsh Bus Quality Standard also promotes awareness of disabilities by offering training to drivers and the Council supports / insists on this.
- 10.5 Welsh Government insists, under the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 2000 [PSVAR], that all buses used for public transportation that have over 22 seats must fully comply, allowing access for wheelchairs from 1 January 2020. We will ensure that school and college transport will comply by September 2021. These changes have of course taken hold, and the buses used for public transportation have conformed to those regulations for some time now.
- 10.6 It is of vital importance that any new transportation strategies include full provisions for all members of society. This must include all transport infrastructures e.g. access to pick-up and drop-off points for all public transport vehicles, including specified spaces for taxis that are close to town centres etc. We will ensure this by undertaking an impact assessment and consulting with people who have specific protected characteristics.

- 10.7 The Council is working with the local community transport organisations in order to provide a flexible and appropriate public transport service for rural Gwynedd.

11. Education

- 11.1 Gwynedd Council provides at least one primary school in each secondary school catchment area that is suitable for children with physical impairments (designated school).
- 11.2 If parents wish for their child to attend another school in the catchment area, the Council and the school will examine the case individually to see whether it is possible to make reasonable adjustments that are suitable for the child.
- 11.3 Gwynedd Council provides at least one secondary school in each area that is accessible for wheelchair users.
- 11.4 Schools will also take advantage of any opportunity to improve the accessibility of schools by undertaking an Accessibility Plan to reduce obstacles within the school.
- 11.5 Every school has anti-bullying policies in order to protect children with specific equality characteristics.

12. Social Care

- 12.1 The Adults, Health and Well-being Department and the Children and Supporting Families Department are committed to acting in accordance with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
- 12.2 A key principle of the act is to put an individual and their needs at the heart of their care, and to give them a voice and control to achieve the outcomes that create well-being.
- 12.3 Other principles include the need to safeguard individuals from abuse, support people to promote their own well-being, and to encourage individuals to become more involved in service planning.
- 12.4 These principles are compatible with the principles of the Equality Act and are fundamental to ensuring fairness for all.

13. Housing

- 13.1 Our Housing and Property service has committed to ensure that the people of Gwynedd have access to a suitable home of a high standard, which is affordable and improves their quality of life.
- 13.2 We will aim to address these objectives by increasing access to affordable housing.
- 13.3 We will provide supported accommodation for homeless individuals and families in order to support them to maintain permanent tenancies.
- 13.4 Also, we will adapt buildings to make houses suitable homes for adults and children with disabilities.

Part C - Employment

- 14.1 The Council expresses its commitment to ensuring equality in employment and acknowledges its responsibility to ensure equality to all of its employees and job applicants, and to foster equal opportunities within the Council.
- 14.2 The Council is taking positive steps to ensure that nobody employed by the Council, or who applies for a job with the Council, is discriminated against on the basis of any equality characteristic.
- 14.3 The Council's staff are entitled to be treated with respect and dignity at work. The Council does not tolerate discrimination or hate crime of any sort by the system, colleagues, service users or other members of the Council.
- 14.4 Every employment and training policy and procedure must be reviewed regularly and assessed for their impact on individuals who share equality characteristics. This is important in order to ensure that they comply with current legislation and that there is no discrimination against any group, whether directly or indirectly.
- 14.5 We inform staff that they have a personal responsibility in the equality field, and that they should show this in their relationship with their colleagues and by promoting a culture of respect generally. The Council has a Staff Code of Conduct and Dignity at Work Policy, which sets out the expectations of everyone who works for Gwynedd Council. We also provide induction training for all new members of staff, in addition to general training on equality and

additional training on specific aspects. We also publish useful information on the intranet.

- 14.6 We produce good practice guidance for the specific fields of employment, which includes ensuring that equality matters are considered. For example, we have published a policy on supporting women who are going through the menopause, and we have developed a policy to support trans individuals. Our main priorities at this time include:
- Removing any barriers that may be preventing women from developing their careers within the Council, with a particular focus on developing women in leadership within the organisation.
 - Carrying out pay audits - a gender pay gap audit and an equal pay audit.
 - Taking steps to improve how we recruit new staff to the workforce.
- 14.7 We use monitoring information to prepare workforce profiles for comparison with the Local Employment Area Market, and action plans. Also, we will adopt positive steps should it become apparent that the policy is not effective.