

Annual Equality Report

Cyngor Gwynedd

2023-2024



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Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce the 2023-24 Annual Report for Cyngor Gwynedd's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 and its Objectives. As this is the final Annual Report for this Plan, it looks at the work that has been completed over the four years and looks at how any further work would be done.

I am pleased to say that the majority of the action points within the Objectives have been completed within the Plan's period. This is commendable when we consider how this period started with the pandemic and the lockdown. We had to adapt the timetables because of that, but we have been able to move forward with the work.

Many of the fields within the objectives need long-term work and therefore many of the themes receive attention in the new Plan. Any work that we have not managed to complete will form part of that work.

As we conclude one period, we therefore look forward to continuing with the work of ensuring fairness for everyone within all our work.

M M Trenholme

Councillor Menna Trenholme
Cabinet Member for Corporate Support



Introduction

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

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

(Equality Act 2010)

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

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

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

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

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

This is the final Annual Report for this plan. In addition to looking at the work completed during the 2023-24 year, we will examine whether the intended work over the past four years has been completed and look ahead to the next Plan. In doing so, it is important to remember that the first two years of the Plan were unprecedented and difficult, with the Covid-19 crisis leading to lockdowns and additional unexpected work. This led to us using different methods of working, and this has affected the timelines for our objectives. The crisis highlighted a number of inequalities and the Welsh Government has responded to this by looking at two fields in particular, namely anti-racism and LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning etc.) by creating Action Plans in these fields. Their intention is to also publish one in the field of disability soon. Following the Covid-19 period, economic factors became more prominent, with more people suffering socio-economic deprivation. These circumstances made us consider whether we needed to amend or add to our objectives during the period of the Plan. Our decision was that our objectives and action points were important and already addressed matters such as the socio-economic duty and the race and LGBTQ+ characteristics. We therefore concluded that our priority should be to continue to address the objectives that we already have in place.

This report therefore shows, per objective, the action points we have committed to in our Strategic Equality Plan, what we were hoping to achieve during 2023/24 and what we were in fact able to achieve during the year and over the entire period.

The report also looks at the type of information the Council gathers in the field of equality and shows how we use it, in accordance with the guidelines of the act.

Objective 1:

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

Action Point 1:

We will create an equality training programme as a core field that will be varied, innovative, specific, and of the highest quality. It will be appropriately tailored for all staff members 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 2023/24?

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

What did we do?

As it was not possible to begin this work in 2020, the timetable slipped. There was further slippage in 2023/24 due to circumstances that were not anticipated within the Learning and Development Team. This means that we have not been able to finish the work for the year, and therefore of course, for the four-year period.

However, there is progress to report, namely:

- The equality e-module has been mandatory since June 2022 and therefore every member of staff is required to complete it. The completion statistics vary substantially across Council Departments. Every Head of Department receives regular reports about the number of staff in their Department who have completed the module as it is their responsibility to encourage staff to complete it.
- A training session on gypsy and travellers was held for staff from the Housing and Property Department.
- Eight sessions of the Your Responsibility for Equality training were offered to Members.
- The Equality Adviser gave their opinion on the pilot for anti-racism training for Members, and a session has been held with some Members.
- Equality has been incorporated into other training titles, namely *Welcome to the Council*, *Ffordd Gwynedd* and *Customer Care*.
- An Equality Training Framework has been established, but work is needed to finish populating it. We started by providing LGBTQ+ training through GISDA. Other titles are in the pipeline, e.g. training for managers on impact assessments (which had to

be delayed - see Point 3.1), Respect and Dignity for the frontline staff and accessibility matters.

- The Unconscious Bias course is available on the Equality Training Framework.

As the work on our Training Framework is unfinished, it will be addressed in the 2024-28 Plan and discussions are already underway in terms of mapping the demand.

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 the equality field. We will also run a promotional campaign using the Members' e-newsletter, "Rhaeadr", to improve understanding of the information available on the Portal.

What did we say we would do in 2023/24?

This action point had already been completed, and the information on the intranet is being updated as necessary.

Action Point 3:

"Ffordd Gwynedd" is the "way" that we in Cyngor Gwynedd will ensure that we put the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do. It is intended to create a situation where the experiences of individuals when they come into contact with the Council are positive and meet their needs. We will continue to work on strengthening the equality element as part of the "Ffordd Gwynedd" training, and the Welcome to the Council sessions for new members of staff.

What did we say we would do in 2023/24?

The work was completed during 2020/21.

Objective 2:

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

Action Point 1:

In order to understand any barriers that the residents of Gwynedd who have various protected characteristics may face when dealing with the Council, we will conduct a thorough 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 2023/24?

In the 2022-23 Annual Report, it was noted that this work had been completed. It was also noted that the results will be considered when creating the 2024-28 Strategic Equality Plan as well as the specific engagement work that would happen on the Plan.

What did we do?

Although the specific work has come to an end, the work in the field of engaging with people with specific equality characteristics continues. There has been wide engagement work over many months, which included meeting with various groups that represented people with protected characteristics, in order to prepare draft equality objectives. There was a consultation period following this. The results of the previous engagement were also considered.

We recognise that engagement is a field that requires continuous attention. Although the work noted in this point has been completed, an action point on engagement also appears in the new Plan.

Action Point 2:

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

What did we promise to do in 2023/24?

Try to expand the Equality Core Group.

What did we do?

The Equality Core Group is ongoing. The work to strengthen and expand it is part of the Council's day to day work. Improving diversity within the Citizens Panel is long-term and although work has been achieved, it also appears as part of an Action Point in the 2024-28 Equality Plan.

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 2023/24?

No specific work was identified for the period in question.

What did we do?

The information from the consultation and engagement on the new Plan will be shared with the departments. Improving our engagement arrangements is part of the Equality Objectives of the new Plan. Updating our Equality and Inclusion Policy, which has been in place since 2021, is part of the Council's day-to-day work.

Objective 3:

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

Action Point 1:

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

What did we promise to do in 2023/24?

Prioritise establishing a new procedure and training by the end of the Plan's period.

What did we do?

There was delay in the work of creating training as we decided to introduce an electronic method for assessing equality impact. In the meantime we have been using an interim template that includes the necessary questions to meet our duty in the fields of equality, socio-economic deprivation and the Welsh language. Unfortunately, we have experienced technical problems with the app and the IT service is still trying to solve it in collaboration with the manufacturers.

The Elected Members have been offered the "Your Responsibility for Equality" training and it includes an extensive part on the importance of assessing impact and how that helps members to make wise decisions.

As this work is unfinished, it will be included in the 2024-28 Plan.

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 2023/24?

Nothing specific was noted for the year.

What did we do?

Training has been offered for Elected Members and a number of sessions have been held.

Action Point 3:

We will continue to work with Council Departments to ensure that due attention is given to equality requirements within any process of identifying savings or cuts. We will ensure that Equality Impact Assessments will be held promptly and that they are of the required standard to contribute to the process of identifying any plans whereby decisions on budgetary cuts may have negative implications for specific minority groups in Gwynedd, and mitigate them where possible.

What did we promise to do in 2023/24?

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

What did we do?

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

Objective 4:

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

Action Point 1:

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

What did we promise to do in 2023/24?

This work will receive continuous attention and will be reported upon annually, and consequently, no specific step had been put forward for 2023/24.

What did we do?

As noted in previous years, the numbers that have shared this information with the Council as their employer are low; we understand that this is a challenge among public sector bodies in general. The number of those who completed it as of 31 March 2024 was slightly higher than previous years, and was almost half of the workforce (49.9%).

This work will continue during the period of the next Plan as there is more to be done on this long-term task.

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, working 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 delivered. We will also work towards putting plans in place to reduce any gaps that emerge in light of the audit.

What did we promise to do in 2023/24?

It was our aim to look at considering pay in relation to other protected characteristics e.g. in terms of disability, race, during the period, if the quality of the data enabled this.

What did we do?

As we do not have sufficient information (see Action Point 1 above), it is not possible for us to assess on any other basis, and therefore seeking to improve the quality and diversity of our data on staff characteristics is our priority in moving forward. It is therefore included in Objective 1 of the next Plan.

Action Point 3:

Work has also been ongoing as part of the Women in Leadership Project (one of the Council Plan's improvement priorities). 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 2023/24?

The project noted:

Despite being firm that it adheres to equal pay, the Council acknowledges that the number of women who hold a managerial role within the Council is disproportionate to the split within the entire workforce - i.e. 70% women 30% men. During the first year of the 2023/24 Council Plan, we stated that we would:

- Continue to hold and develop the activities that form the basis for the project's work, such as the Developing Potential Programme, Teatime Chats. Incorporating the aspiration of the Leadership Team into the programme for the year;
- Continue to promote and raise awareness of unconscious bias and self-awareness amongst managers and staff;
- Hold events to raise awareness amongst men;
- Consider the appointment process in terms of trialling anonymising job candidates when drawing up the short list;
- Build on the statistical base that has already been established for the purpose of measuring the success of the project;
- Discover what Services across the Council are doing to encourage women to apply for more senior posts in order to identify and share good practice;
- Address the composition of committees and groups to ensure that there is balance in terms of male and female representation;
- Continue to raise awareness of the project's work by introducing a Package that provides information about the purpose and ambition of the project, the journey to date and the next steps.

What progress was made in 2023/24?

- Each of the project's milestones have been addressed during the year, and some of the project's elements are incorporating themselves into the Department's usual work programme such as the developmental programme series (two other series were held this year) and the teatime chats. Over 40 women have now followed the Developmental Programme, and analytical work on the 3 first cohorts shows that 33% of the attendees have attained a senior position since completing the Programme.
- The project's activity for the year has come to an end on International Women's Day on 8 March 2024, with the 'Through the Eyes of Women' event which aimed at raising awareness amongst men as well as women.
- Statistics have been updated and confirm that there has been progress in the percentage of managerial posts within the Council that are held by women, with an increase in the figure from 30% to 41% since establishing the project. These statistics have been broken down into Departmental level and are in the process of being presented to each Head of Department in order to target intervention in accordance with the needs of any specific Department. A lot of good work is happening within Departments, such as the work of developing women in STEM and Engineering fields that is happening in Highways and Municipal.
- The pilot of anonymous application forms is ongoing and work is underway to collect feedback from each relevant Manager who has been through the process of drawing up an anonymous short list. It is fair to say that a comparatively low number of posts in the pilot cohort have been advertised, therefore it was agreed to extend the pilot until September 2024.
- An Information Pack for the project has been placed on the project intranet pages and conversations have been arranged with Heads of Department to discuss statistics of their individual Departments and how best to share the information pack within their Department.

As the Women in Leadership work is ongoing as a stand-alone project, it will not be included in the next plan.

Objective 5:

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

Action Point 1:

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

What did we promise to do in 2023/24?

No specific work has been identified in the Strategic Equality Plan. This work stream, like the others, will continue to the new Plan.

Action Point 2:

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

What did we promise to do in 2023/24?

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

What did we do?

Work was done regionally to engage with specific groups to find the barriers that they experienced when looking for work with public organisations. A report on the findings was received and we will use it when moving forward with this work in 2024-28.

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 2023/24?

In the Strategic Equality Plan we stated that we would work to reach Level 2 accreditation by September 2022. The decision had been made to collaborate with the *Inclusive Employers* company instead of *Stonewall* to give attention to each equality characteristic.

What did we do?

A report was received from the Inclusive Employers company which highlighted our good practices and improvement points. The findings of that report are a base for our work programme in the 2024/28 Strategic Equality Plan.

Information

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

- **Monitoring Staff Equality Details**

As filling the form is optional (in accordance with the guidelines), too few staff members have completed it. We have recognised this, and are working to encourage more people to complete it (Objective 4, Action Point 1). When we have sufficient information, we will be able to identify pay gaps, on a wider level than merely gender-based (Objective 4, Action Point 2) and see if action is needed to improve the diversity of our workforce (Objective 5). Around 50% of the workforce had completed the questionnaire as at 31 March 2024, a figure which is a slight improvement on previous years. The information on the equality characteristics of our workforce can be found in Appendix 1 to show if there are equal opportunities within the Council

- **Complaints and concerns**

Eight formal complaints about discrimination were received because of equality characteristics and a range of informal complaints came to the attention of the equality officers. Details of the complaints are seen in appendix 2.

Some patterns were seen within the complaints, and some related to the same service. The two areas pattern has been recognised is education (including transport) and beaches. The equality officers will work with the services to further examine this.

- **Engagement**

Although the Council often engages with the public on all sorts of topics, we have realised that we do not have sufficient specific information about the precise barriers facing the people of Gwynedd when engaging with the Council. It was therefore decided to include Objective 2 to address this.

In addition to the work appointed in Objective 2, the Equality Officers conducted exercises to gauge public opinions throughout much of 2023-24 in order to gather sufficient information to form our Objectives for 2024-28. There was an engagement period between April and August, then, after forming the draft Objectives, there was a consultation from the end of October until January. A variety of methods were used to gather views, including online questionnaires, paper and easy to read formats, as well as meetings with different groups of people with protected characteristics.

The Communication and Engagement Service also encourages Services to including the equality questions in every survey.

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

- **Quantitative Data**

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

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

We acknowledge that collecting information, whether it be quantitative or the voice of people with life experience, is an important matter that must continue. It was decided that it should continue in 2024-28 and Objective 2 in the new Equality Plan relates to this work.

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

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

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

The ways in which Cyngor Gwynedd uses the above information to meet the 3 aims include:

- **To improve equality of opportunity within the workforce** - as well as the usual policies and procedures to ensure equality, respect and dignity within employment, from recruiting onwards, we have two specific Objectives relating to the above (Objectives 4 and 5). As data, including views, has shown that this is still a matter that needs to be addressed, we have an Objective in our new Equality Plan which addresses it. We will continue to collect data through the staff forums that we intend to hold.
- **To ensure that our internal arrangements are suitable and promote equality, respect and dignity** - we have many arrangements including training, assessing impact, collecting data etc. and we will use the information to improve the arrangements to fulfil the three aims. This is especially true about our impact

assessments, which will ensure that we always examine the three aims when we change a policy or procedure. We also use the information to identify specific fields that need to be addressed within training. It is important that staff members are aware of the need to consider equality in their everyday work therefore the equality e-module, which is based on the three aims, is mandatory training.

- **Equality within our services** - The impact assessments, as we have already mentioned, ensure compliance with the three aims as they are developed. Specific information will also need to be collected to improve access to those services in accordance with Objective 4. As each one of us possesses at least five protected characteristics, every part of the Council's work contributes towards well-being based on equality in some way. Services gather information in their own fields and use the above-mentioned information to identify the best way of securing equal opportunities for specific groups and fostering good relations. Examples of this work can be seen in our Press Releases which are available here: [Press releases \(llyw.cymru\)](#)
- **Equality within education** - As with the other services, we fulfil the three aims by undertaking impact assessments and gathering information as required to provide support in our work.