

Blaenau Gwent

Strategic Equality Plan

Annual Report 2021 – 2022



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

**Annual Strategic Equality Monitoring Report
October 2020 – 2022**

“A More Equal Wales, putting fairness and equalities at the heart of everything we do!”

Hard copies of the annual report have also been made available in each of Blaenau Gwent’s local libraries. If you do require this document in a different format, e.g. large print, Braille, audio version, etc. please contact:

Email: pps@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

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Foreword

We are pleased to provide our progress towards the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's [Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24](#). The annual report covers the period of April 2020-March 2021 and sets out how we are meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

Putting fairness and equalities at the heart of everything we do is central to the delivery of our equalities plan. We recognise our key role, as a public body, in advancing and strengthening equalities across Blaenau Gwent and are committed to being a 'fair and equitable' organisation as outlined in our [Corporate Plan 2018-22](#).

To achieve this, we continue to deliver a range of programmes and activities, in partnership with other public bodies, to support the delivery of our equality objectives and achieve meaningful equality outcomes for Blaenau Gwent. Including making progress towards contributing to the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act](#) and the seven National Goals.

We must acknowledge the growing importance of our equality work, during 2020 and 2021, as we continue to respond to the impacts of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Our annual report highlights the Community Impact Assessment work we undertook to better understand how people's lives are being affected, particularly those with protected characteristics. The important findings of this work are now being used to inform Blaenau Gwent's recovery planning as well as our delivery for the remaining two years of our equality plan.

Finally, we would like to thank our staff, local communities, and stakeholders for their continued support in helping us to deliver our statutory commitments.



Councillor Nigel Daniels,
Leader of the Council



Damien McCann
Interim Chief Executive

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg
This document is available in Welsh

Introduction

Our annual report highlights how we are meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty (the “general duty”) by ensuring we are supporting a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations. We continue to do this by recognising the value of diversity through our day-to-day activities and how we deliver our policies and services:

- 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.

Our annual report is divided into six main sections—one for each of our strategic equality objectives. Each main section has been divided into the following sub-sections:

- Overview – what we said we would do
- Progress – what we did
- Good practice examples
- Next steps

Our annual report concludes by summarising what actions we intend to deliver over the remaining two years of the plan as part of our next steps.

Progress against Equality Objectives

1. Equality Objective

“We will be an organisation who ensures fairness and equalities in everything that we do”

Overview (what we said we would do)

We want to be an organisation who ensures equality and fairness sits at the heart of core values and everything we do and is ‘business as usual’. Recognising the value of equality work in supporting us to achieve meaningful outcomes for our staff, citizens, local communities, and stakeholders, such as developing a supportive workforce culture or providing services which are accessible for all.

Our aim is to advance equality across Blaenau Gwent through strong political and professional leadership and by developing an effective framework for delivery supported by the whole organisation.

Progress (what we did)

Our Corporate Leadership Team and Schools’ management teams continue to develop and strengthen its equality programme. Two special online workshops have been held to consider the organisations strategic equality objectives; what we are currently delivering; and what actions need to be taken forward collectively to strengthen our approach as ‘One Council’ in 2022/23.

We have continued to champion the equality agenda both politically and professionally to raise the profile of equality and we continue to champion international campaigns such as Black History Month, Holocaust Memorial Day, LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer +) History month etc. For example, our Managing Director and Chair of the Council hosted a coffee morning with staff to celebrate International Women’s Day.

Our Equality Champion and Leader sits on the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Members Equality Network and the Council is also represented at various National and Regional Equality Network meetings to collaborate and share good practice and learning.

As an organisation we continue to pledge our support towards new National equality campaigns and emerging policies, such as [Zero Racism Wales](#); Welsh Government’s vision of an Anti-Racist Wales by 2030 - [Draft Race Equality Action Plan](#) and [Draft LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales](#) as well as long-standing equality initiatives such as Proud Council’s. Working together with other Local Authorities across Wales we supported Pride and delivered local projects such as our Young People for Pride Week - Arts Competition in August 2021.

Following the commencement of the Socio-economic Duty, in April 2021, we undertook a review of our existing Equality Impact Assessment process and took steps to develop a new Integrated Impact Assessment process to meet our new Public Sector Equality Duty requirements. The new Integrated Impact Assessment provides a process for reducing inequalities of outcomes during the development of any newly proposed strategies, policies, or service delivery reviews etc. and is a key driver for ensuring equality is fully integrated as part of the Council's business functions. It also ensures key strategic decisions (such as corporate plans, improvement plans, or strategic objectives etc) consider how the impacts of socio-economic disadvantages—defined as people *“living in less favourable social and economic circumstances than others living in the same society”* (Welsh Government)— can be minimised by applying reasonable adjustments.

A screening template and full assessment template went live on September 2021 and was included as part of our new Corporate Reporting arrangements. To support the new arrangements Corporate and Senior Management Teams received briefing sessions which provided full guidance on meeting the new requirements and emphasised the opportunity of reducing negative impacts against people who are protected by the Equality (Wales) Act 2010 through better decision-making processes.

Linked to this work we continue to strengthen and develop the use of equality data and intelligence to inform Council business. For example, following the Covid-19 pandemic we undertook a Community Impact Assessment for Older people to better understand the impacts using a mix of primary and secondary sources such as National, Regional and Local data sets as well as local people's lived experiences. This work builds on our previous Community Impact Assessments which considered Children & Young People, Families with Young Children and People with a Learning Disability. The findings of this work have been used to inform the Council's recovery planning process.

Our annual Workforce Equality data for 2020/21 is available via Open Source on Blaenau Gwent Council's website under the [“Equality in Blaenau Gwent”](#) page. This data is used to gain an effective picture of the diversity of our organisation and has been used to inform the development of our new Workforce Development Strategy.

Good Practice Examples

Winner of the Proud Council Pride Award ([Twitter - social media message](#))

“Congratulations to Eva for creating this amazing piece of music @ProudCouncils chose as one of the winners of the Pride “Becoming Me” competition for young people! Thank You to every young person who took part, you made the job of choosing a winner extremely difficult! “

International Women’s Day (#BreakTheBias) – 8th of March 2022

To celebrate International Women’s Day a coffee morning was hosted by our Managing Director, Michelle Morris for all staff to come together to celebrate. A social media campaign was launched to mark the occasion.



Next Steps

- Continue to raise the profile of the equality agenda across the organisation and embed it as “business as usual”, supported through the delivery of our 2022-23 Action Plan which will be monitored and reviewed via the Council’s business planning arrangements.
- Ensure the organisation receives up to date guidance and support, including the sharing of good practice, to achieve its Public Sector Equality Duty. Including the continued engagement of political and professional leadership teams and ongoing support of National and Regional equality campaigns.
- To review the effectiveness of the new Integrated Impact Assessment process and implementation of the Socio-economic Duty across the organisation to maximise equality outcomes.
- Ensure equality data and intelligence, such as the findings of the Community Impact Assessments, are accessible to support better decision-making.

2. Equality Objective

“We will be an equal opportunity employer with a workforce that values equalities and diversity”

Overview (what we said we would do)

We recognise the value of being an equal opportunity employer and being identified as an employer of choice. We want to take the necessary steps to create and maintain a diverse workforce as we acknowledge the real benefits this can bring to the organisation as well as the local people and communities we serve.

Our aim is to develop a workforce *“that values equality and diversity”* in order to deliver our core value of being an *“equitable and fair”* organisation as outlined in our [Corporate Plan 2018-22](#).

Progress (what we did)

We have developed a new [Workforce Strategy 2021-26](#) which sets out the key priority outcomes we need to achieve in order to create an effective workforce:

- Health, culture, and effective leadership
- Excellence in management across the council
- Highly motivate engaged workforce
- Evidence based decision making, planning and delivery
- Modern employer of choice

To support us becoming a ‘modern employer of choice’ initial work has been undertaken to understand the diversity of the workforce. For example, considering workforce data and information has allowed us to understand equality matters such as the Gender Pay Gap—a statutory equality measure we use to understand the difference in average earnings between women and men. On assessment, men and women are paid equally for doing equivalent jobs across Blaenau Gwent Council, with a predominantly female workforce (76.5% female, 23.5% male), occupying a high percentage of jobs across all four pay quartiles. Furthermore, our gender pay gap of 2.94 is significantly lower than the national UK average.

Further information can be found on Blaenau Gwent Council’s website, under the page [“Pay Policy Statement”](#) which is due to be updates in 2023. However, we recognise more work needs to be done to improve the quality of our workforce data, across all of the protected characteristics, so we can gain a more accurate picture of how diverse we are, and take any

necessary steps required to become an organisation representative of its local area and the communities we serve.

In 2021, we implemented our new Agile Working Policy which ensured staff were able to work at home, or from the community safely and effectively, following risk assessments, which ensured staff were provided the necessary adjustments or equipment to carry out their duties effectively.

Also, we have demonstrated our commitment towards promoting equality in the workplace by reviewing, updating and creating the following policies and procedures:

- Pay Policy
- Domestic Abuse, Violence and Sexual Violence Policy
- Trans Equality Policy
- Armed Forces Recruitment Policy.

Recognising that these policies enable us to strengthen equality of opportunity.

We continue to provide a wide range of equality training opportunities to our workforce. For example, 33 staff have complemented Unconscious Bias training; 19 staff attended LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer +) training supported by the organisation Stonewall; 3 staff attending Pride and Prejudice LGBTQ+ training delivered by Children in Wales; as well as offering a range of specialist e-Module learning opportunities via the Blaenau Gwent & Caerphilly Workforce Development team on equality and to support staff who assist people with protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act. Also, the West Gwent Cohesion Team, alongside Victim Support, delivered special Hate Crime Awareness sessions to Council Members, which will also be delivered next year for new Council Members as a package to services who request it.

Steps to extend our existing training opportunities has been underway over the past year, including the development of a comprehensive Equality Training & Resources Toolkit which will be made available to all staff in April 2022. The toolkit is a one-stop-shop for up-to-date equality information, guidance, case study examples, as well as informal and formal training opportunities which are available from specialist agencies and organisations, such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) on key equality topics.

Good practice examples

We launched a weekly Well-being Wednesday staff bulletin which provides up to date access to well-being services such as our Care First service, including mental health services and training opportunities etc.



Next steps

- We will test if our workforce values equalities and diversity through continued staff engagement and involvement and identify any key areas for improvement.
- We will review the diversity of our workforce using our workforce data and where appropriate implement the delivery of positive recruitment drives.
- Implement and review the Equality Training & Resources Toolkit.
- We will establish a Corporate Equality Network with representation from the whole organisation.

3. Equality Objective

“We will support children and young people, particularly those with protected characteristics, to achieve their learning ambitions”.

Overview (what we said we would do)

Education is identified as a key priority within our [Corporate Plan 2018-22](#) and we are committed to ‘improving pupil outcomes, progress, and well-being, particularly for our most able and vulnerable pupils’. We believe that everyone should have appropriate access to learning opportunities and the support required to enable them to achieve their learning ambitions. Recognising that learning provides the foundation for better life prospects.

Our aim is to maximise the learning outcomes of pupils who are covered by one, or more of the protected characteristics as identified within the Act, particularly where gaps in educational attainment are identified.

Progress (what we did)

We continue to build strong relationships with our schools and provide support to ensure the latest equality advice and guidance is provided and understood as well as raising awareness of our strategic equality objectives and for schools to gain a better understanding on how they contribute. For example, a schools’ equality training and resources toolkit has been developed which provides links to the latest guidance around specific equality policies as well as the contact details of key agencies and organisations who can provide specialist support, if needed. Also, equality information is regularly featured in the schools’ Headteacher News Bulletin (for example, Blaenau Gwent Council’s pledge to Zero Racism Wales and call for individual schools to sign-up).

Gypsy and Traveller pupils were fully supported during Covid-19 at a time where education needed to be delivered differently to ensure the safety of all pupils. The Education and Traveller Service worked with families to reassure them and ease anxieties during this difficult time and further help has been offered to encourage children back to school. This work includes an Integration Plan for those Gypsy and Traveller pupils that are electively home educated to phase them back into secondary school as well as a Gypsy and Traveller attendance policy to support attendance recording in schools and education packs for those of our Gypsy and Traveller pupils can keep up with their education whilst travelling. Other projects include:

- Learning celebration event in 2022/23 which included working with Gypsy & Traveller children to understand the barriers to learning.
- Weekly accredited Arts programme for parents and children aged 11-21
- Flying Start Mother and Baby Group

During 2020 and 2021 our primary focus was developing schools' equality plans and identify key areas of equality work to take forward in 2022 to 2023 which will lead to meaningful equality outcomes for pupils. For example, a special Strategic Equality Plan workshop was held with schools' Management Teams as well as in-depth one-to-one sessions with individual schools to understand the range of equality work already being delivered by schools and to identify areas for future development. All information gathered was collated and used to create a concise equality framework for schools which is aligned with our Strategic Equality Plan objectives and identifies practical projects and actions schools can deliver.

Further work is being undertaken with schools to develop appropriate mechanisms to monitor and track progress, such as a Case Study template to capture any good practice being delivered in school settings as well as establishing a Schools Equality Network led by the Strategic Education Improvement Manager

Specific work has also been taken forward in consultation with schools to improve the recording of bullying incidents via the 'MyConcern' data system to develop better intelligence on the types of issues occurring, and as a method for determining appropriate interventions or training for school staff and pupils to address and prevent future issues.

We have continued our work with our Youth Forum and the Children's Grand Council to share information and increase learning opportunities around equality and diversity as well as improve awareness around the United Nations Conventions on the Right of the Child (UNCRC). We are committed to supporting children and young people to deliver on priorities that are important to them, both locally, regionally, and nationally. This year 12 online Children's Grand Council sessions have been delivered with 32 young people taking part and 12 Youth Forum sessions have been held as well as specific sessions around their overarching priority of Mental Health (e.g., Positive Body Campaign, launching a gym for young people etc.).

Families First are supporting 5 LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer +) groups for young people including groups set up in school, where 104 young people attend to gain information, talk about their feelings, and have a voice in order to empower them to express themselves in a supportive environment. Plans to expand this support to Primary schools is currently being explored. Also, the 14+ team, Youth Services, Families First and the Youth Forum have worked together to deliver joint excursions and bespoke sessions

which bring young people from a range of different backgrounds together to share experiences and explore ways of celebrating difference.

Good practice examples

Young Carers Teams

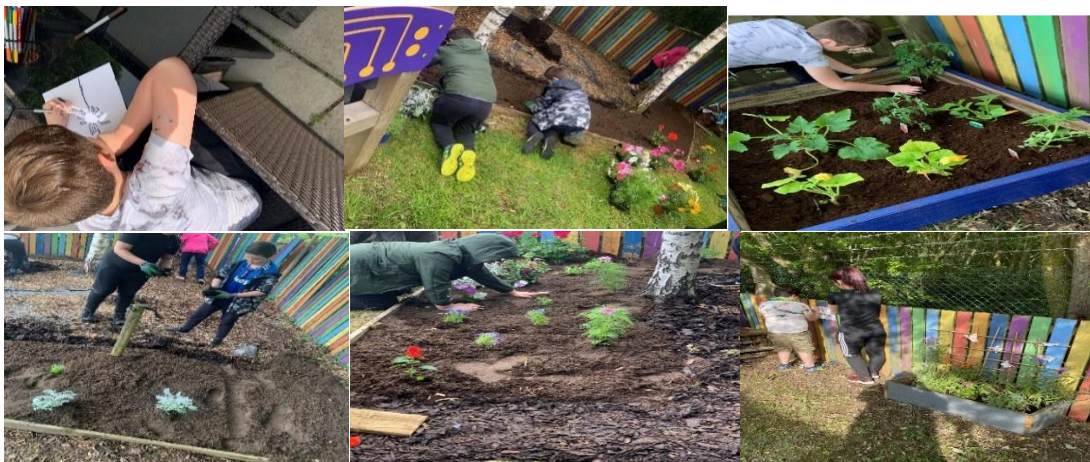
The Blaenau Gwent Young Carers Project, supported by Families First, held a consultation event with young carers November 23rd 2021 to find out about how they feel; what support would help them; how can their voices be heard; and, to raise awareness about the Youth Forum Platform and Young Carers National ID Card Scheme. Since the project launched in April 2021, 64 young people have received a card and 85 young carers are being support.

The Young Carers support team have also developed film to raise awareness about young carers link can be found here <https://learning.wales.nhs.uk/mod/scorm/view.php?id=17510>

Some of BG's Young carers

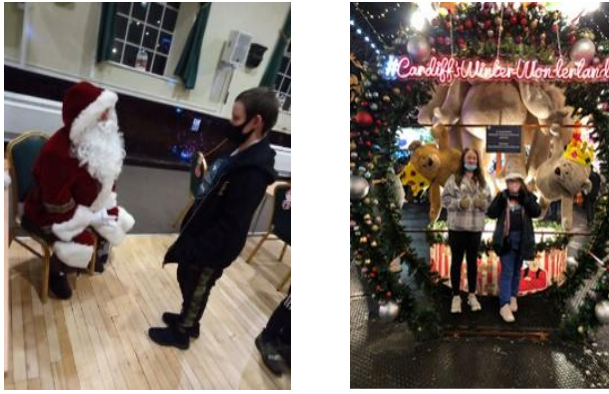


Young Carers Planting Project



Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg
This document is available in Welsh

Young carers (Christmas)



School case Study

Equality Case Studies-Shine a light on your work

School Name: Cwm Primary

1. Background Information

Polish child in Year 6 who was very shy and would only speak English to a very small group of children (2 or 3), although she was able to understand English.

2. What we did

We arranged an assembly with support from GEMS and pupil was able to celebrate her country, share traditions and customs.

3. How we did it

Support from Gems – we used lots of visual aids and encouraged the children in school to say some phrases in Polish, so they could understand how difficult it was for the pupil to integrate.

4. What were the outcomes/result?

The pupil became more confident in speaking with pupils who wanted to know more about her country. The pupil did well in end of stage results as she started to speak in English and teacher was able to assess her speaking and listening capability. This also allowed the other children to understand how difficult this was and encouraged them to learn about other cultures.

5. Next steps if applicable

The pupil has made a good transition to secondary education and is more confident.

Rights Respecting Schools

The UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) works with schools to create safe and inspiring places to learn, where children are respected, their talents are nurtured, and they can thrive. The Rights Respecting Schools Award (RSSA) embeds these values in daily school life and gives children the best chance to lead happy, healthy lives and to be responsible, active citizens.

The Award recognises a school's achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into practice within the school and beyond. The RSSA programme unifies a range of educational priorities in all UK jurisdictions; the global dimension, social and emotional aspects of learning, hence supports schools to embed children's human rights in their ethos and culture. It recognises achievement in putting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) at the heart of a school's practice to improve wellbeing and help all children and young people realise their potential.

The Award is based on principles of equity, dignity, non-discrimination, and participation. Schools involved in the Award have reported a positive impact on relationships and wellbeing, leading to better learning and behaviour, improved academic standards and less bullying, community cohesion and sustainable development.

Schools within Blaenau Gwent endeavour to align wellbeing priorities for the pupils, staff, and community of their school to the articles (as mentioned below) to ensure the Rights Respecting principles are understood and implemented.

To date 1 school has achieved the Gold Award, 3 schools are working towards Gold, 10 schools have achieved the bronze and/or silver award, 5 schools are working towards it whilst a number have expressed an interest to work towards this post Covid. It is important to state that all schools interlink Rights Respecting Schools and Values Based Education principles regardless of whether working towards the award or not. This helps develop using Rights and Values as a core theme where Rights and Rights Language is used throughout the curriculum.

Gypsy Traveller Project



Next steps

- Establish mechanism for schools to monitor progress of delivery of schools' equality plans; set up schools' equality network; and finalise processes and protocols for recording bullying incidents via "My Concerns" and review its effectiveness.
- Consider findings from the Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Is Wales Fairer?' National Report regarding gaps in learning outcomes for pupils protected by the Equality Act and undertake research to determine whether these findings apply to Blaenau Gwent learners and if so, what steps need to be taken to support improvements.
- Working in partnership with other organisations and agencies continue expanding Blaenau Gwent's Children's and Young People Network to ensure opportunities to get involved are maximised and children and young people's voices are heard.
- Continue to support the development of project work across 2022/23 for Gypsy and Traveller children

4. Equality Objective

“We will promote and support safe, friendly and cohesive communities”

Overview (what we said we would do)

Blaenau Gwent Council is committed towards the Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act National Goals of supporting ‘a more Equal Wales’ and a ‘Wales of Cohesive Communities’.

Working in partnership with the West Gwent Community Cohesion Programme and local Community Safety Partnership we continue to deliver a range of projects and initiatives which promotes increased awareness and understanding; encourages and celebrates diversity; and brings people and local communities together to strengthen community spirit and resilience.

Progress (what we did)

Successfully raised awareness and understanding of numerous International and National equality and cohesion campaigns via social media as well as deliver specific initiatives with staff, local people and communities and stakeholders (for example, Youth Forum, Citizen Panel etc.). Examples of the campaigns supported includes Holocaust Memorial Day, Show Racism the Red Card, LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer +) History Month, Pride, White Ribbon Day (campaign to end domestic violence), Black History Month and International Children’s Day.

Since 2016, Blaenau Gwent Council has supported the UK’s Resettlement Scheme Programme, working in partnership with a wide range of public, third sector and private organisations, to deliver a holistic package of support. This initial work resulted in 4 Syrian families (20 individuals) who fled Syria being assisted.

In May 2021, the decision was taken to continue our support by participating in the Afghan Resettlement Programme and Wider Asylum Seeker Dispersal Scheme as a pilot. Therefore, offering to prepare a further 2 properties for accommodation. Participation in the Wider Dispersal Scheme demonstrates our commitment towards supporting Welsh Governments ambition of Wales being a Nation of Sanctuary. As a Local Authority we are supporting the two Government schemes to help those fleeing the war in Ukraine. This scheme is to help people fleeing Ukraine to come and join a UK-based family member or extend their stay in the UK. More information can be found on our website- [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Ukraine - How you can help \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

We have worked effectively with a range of local community groups to enable them to promote inclusion, as well increased awareness of further support and funding opportunities to support Covid-19 recovery and well-being initiatives, based on our Community Impact Assessment findings. For example, working with Public Services Board partners we supported the development and delivery of the participatory budgeting Community Choice, Community Voice programme. This resulted in £252,393 funding being awarded to 40 community groups delivering local projects.

We have also continued to work in partnership with Registered Social Landlords, GAVO, Public Health Wales to maximise funds to address the impacts of loneliness and isolation. The Loneliness and Isolation fund was launched in December 2021 enabling local community groups to reconvene following the pandemic and support the wider community.

Home and fire safety services were provided to victims of crime, anti-social behaviour, and domestic violence; and we continued to deliver initiatives which protect, support and empower those who are vulnerable to exploitation by criminals involved in supporting violent extremism or terrorism as well as human trafficking and modern slavery.

Good practice examples

Hate Crime Awareness Event in partnership Gwent Community Cohesion Team

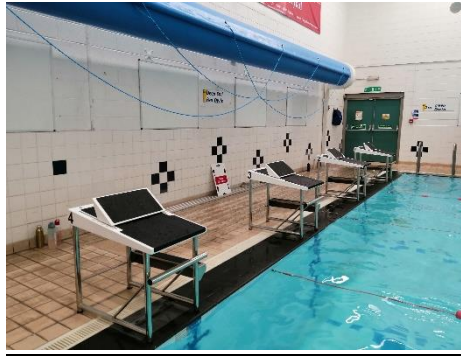


White Ribbon Day

**Gwent
White Ribbon
Day
2021**
#30Challenge



Community Voice, Community Choice – Abertillery Otters Swimming Club (special equipment)



Next Steps

- Continue to support National equality campaign (e.g., Black History Month, Holocaust Memorial)
- Deliver Community Cohesion training (e.g., Hate Crime Awareness) for Corporate Leadership Team, Members, and staff.
- Continue to provide representation and National, Regional and Local Equality and Community Cohesion Networks supporting the sharing of intelligence, learning and good practice.
- Support the delivery of the Afghan Resettlement Programme and Wider Asylum Seeker Dispersal Scheme pilot.
- Support the delivery of the participatory budgeting Community Choice, Community Voice programme 2022-23 to aid Covid-19 recovery and improve area well-being.
- Working with our partners, post-Covid-19, support the re-building of community provisions which support community cohesion activities.

5. Equality Objective

“We will ensure there is meaningful involvement with people who have protected characteristics and key stakeholders that represent their interests”

Overview (what we said we would do)

We recognise the importance of meaningful involvement which enables people, communities, and stakeholders to have a voice, and have genuine opportunities to work together with us to help improve the delivery of our services.

As set out in the Council’s Corporate Engagement Strategy 2018-23 we are committed to ensuring people covered by one, or more of the protected characteristics, are given meaningful opportunities to influence key decisions which affect them and achieve this by applying the National Principles for Public Engagement and the National Principles for Children and Young People’s Participation.

Progress (what we did)

In March 2020, the Covid-19 global pandemic had a huge impact on local communities as well as public service delivery following lock down to keep everyone safe in-line with Welsh Government’s Guidelines. This meant a significant majority of community groups, networks, and forums were no longer able to meet in-person and other methods of engagement needing to be explored such as digital online platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Adapting to these new ways was challenging for several reasons, such as accessibility issues, cyber security and being able to provide simultaneous Welsh language translation. However, it also presented new opportunities to engage with a range of different people who were digitally included and found participation via in-person methods more challenging. As we look ahead, we acknowledge the importance of reflecting and testing what the future of ‘meaningful involvement’ looks like for everyone and ensuring those with protected characteristics can continue to have a voice and influence decision-making. As part of our next steps, during 2022/23, we will consider how we can safely reconvene in-person forums like our equality network ‘Voices of our Valleys’ but will also consider how we can incorporate the uses of technology to support other people to get involved as their preferred method to participate.

Initial work is underway to review and enhance Blaenau Gwent’s current Citizen Panel so it’s fit-for-purpose and representative of our local area. The Citizen Panel is The panel gives local people as well as stakeholders the opportunity to get involved and have their say on local matters, changes to services or decision being made by the Council or other public services, which are important to them or the local area. For example, Citizen Panel members often

participate in surveys, in-depth interviews, telephone surveys, attend focus groups or engagement events on a voluntary basis.

During 2021, we supported the Gwent Public Services Board to deliver its involvement programme locally as well as regionally to support the development of the Gwent Well-being Assessment in accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. This includes engaging people with protected characteristics, to assess what matters to them now and in the future.

Blaenau Gwent support the development of a regional Gwent Well-being survey which was provided in over 10 languages as well as local delivery. Despite it being unsafe to deliver in-person engagement, due to the pandemic, 402 people participated from Blaenau Gwent, including key forums and networks (such as the 50+ Network, Youth Forum), a testament of the strong partnership working in place between public and third sector partners. Plans are already underway to develop the next phase, to be delivered during Summer 2022, to support the development of the Gwent Well-being Plan with plans to deliver a mix of in-person and digital involvement opportunities.

We have continued to develop and promote the Youth Forum and Blaenau Gwent Youth Network to ensure everyone can get involved, outside of traditional meeting arrangements, which has enabled a range of young people from different backgrounds to get involved and support the Youth Forum deliver its priorities around mental health, physical activity, bullying and climate change etc. For example, the Youth Forum supported Aneurin Bevan Health Board to develop its mental health services for young people and new website '[Melo Cymru](#)' and won 'Best Scientific and Educational Film' for their film about Climate Change at the National Young People's Film Awards.

As an authority, our Strategic Transformation Team has undertaken several pilot user research projects within Social Services, Street Cleansing and Planning to help us improve the services we deliver for local people, communities, and stakeholders. We have gained valuable insights through this work which has helped us understand how the community access support and information and what improvements can be made to ensure its accessible for all our customers, including those with protected characteristics.

BG Adult Carers Engagement Service continued providing a holistic package of support during the pandemic such as Carers Rights, Carers Assessments, Benefits, Employment & Skills as well as bespoke support from specialist organisations and agencies (e.g., Parkinson's, Dementia, Substance Misuse, Domestic Abuse etc.) This included:

- Providing 29 carers with advice and assistance
- Providing 40 carers with key information

- Delivering 115 appointments.
- Attending 37 Multi-disciplinary Team meetings

Good practice examples

We have promoted the Older People's Commissioner Anti-Ageism Communications Toolkit internally and across our partner networks.

Adult Carers Support Team

Quotes from those supported

"It's so lovely to talk to you, thank you so much for calling and asking how I am"

"Thank you so much Angela. I can't believe I cried but I have never opened up to someone about how I feel like that before. It's been so good to have a chat with someone that's not family. I now realise how much I have dealt with and continue to deal with. It's reminded me that I have been strong. Thank you for the opportunity of speaking so openly with you"

"It's just been so good to talk to someone who has listened to me and for me to be so open about how I have been feeling"

"It's been so good just speaking with you and to have reassurance regarding my situation. Thank you so much for listening and giving me details about accessing support should I need it in respect of my Husband"

"Thanks so much for your call today it has really helped me just to get it all out. I want to be able to care for Mum and know that she is safe but I just feel exhausted. Thank you for listening to me today – it means a lot"

"I feel perked up this morning. I've been in a really dark place and I've never had support like yours before, it has really helped me"

Quotes from GP surgeries about the work

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg
This document is available in Welsh

“The service and support you provide to the practice and patients exceeds high expectations. The service link you have is strong and you always update and help us with constructive advice and feedback. Your attendance at the MDT meetings is very good and we would like to thank you for the good work you do”

(Gurninder Kaur, PM, Glyn Ebwy Surgery)

Case Study

CJ is a carer for his wife, who at the start of support was undergoing treatment for a rare cancer, and is now sadly terminal (though they do not know this). The couple are in their 50's and CJ is currently off work sick – partly due to his wife and partly due to witnessing a fatal accident at work. He has also lost his parents, friend, uncles, dog and sibling over the last 18 months and has bought a house and converted it for his wife.

CJ was referred to me by the GP at Brynmawr Surgery and also by the GP Home Visiting Service and we discussed the case in the MDT before I rang him, he is a very proud man who does not open up about his feelings or that he needs help, but had contacted the surgery as he was feeling so low. Primary Mental Health are also supporting.

When I first spoke to CJ, he was very grateful and kept saying that he couldn't believe the support he is being offered and that he hadn't expected it, however he was reluctant to accept the support as he felt there were people worse off than him, and needed reassurance that he is entitled to the support.

Over the months I have rang him on average once a fortnight and CJ has opened up about how much he is struggling. This is mainly because of his wife as he is scared for the future and hates seeing her in pain, and partly because he is really missing working. CJ has a passion to help troubled teenagers and when he is feeling low we will spend time talking about this and his future hopes to move into this line of work. I suggested and contacted a local organisation (with his consent) who then rang him and arranged for him to volunteer with teenagers. This has been a real positive for him and has given him something else to focus, even if just for a few hours as well as reducing his isolation. I also signposted him to Careers Wales who he has contacted.

CJ has been open about his isolation, his wife spends most of her time in bed, his parents and best friend passed away and he is feeling hurt that many other friends have stopped contacting him. He regularly says that I am the only person he feels he can talk too, however in order not to create dependency we discuss other options.

Each call lasts at least an hour and a half, at times they have lasted over two hours. I listen carefully to CJ's tone, often when I first call he will sound very flat, so we chat for a while, then discuss any sensitive matters, then have a general chat about anything and everything, until I can hear he is in a better place. At times I have broached his mental health if I can hear that he is very low and encouraged him to ring the surgery and book in with the mental health worker/ PWP there (I informed the GP in the MDT of his low mood) and have had to ask recently if he is having suicidal thoughts after a couple of comments he made.

CJ has been very reluctant to accept any benefit support and we have spoken many times about this as his sick pay has now reduced to half pay after 12 months. He is focused on selling a house he bought and did up previously, rather than accepting benefits, but is at risk of running out of savings before selling the house. We have discussed the pros and cons and CJ is aware of the risks and consequences, so he can make his own informed choice. I have signposted him to the MacMillan benefit team at Velindre (where he goes regularly).

I have also liaised with the GP and surgery as there was friction over his calls to the surgery. I explained that CJ is very scared and asked them to communicate directly with Velindre Hospital rather than CJ being the "go between" as it is adding to his carer strain and he doesn't always understand the medical terms, which the GP said she will do.

Pictures-carers receiving their gift bags



BG Adult Carers Engagement Team

 <p>Carers Lead Officer Tania Hooper 07773 202112</p>	 <p>Carers Engagement Officer Angela James 07843 371574 Tredegar/Elbow Vale/Beaufort/ Cwm area</p>	 <p>Carers Engagement Officer Verity Lewis 07843 371576 Brynmawr/Sialina/Aberthaw/ Six Bells/Aberberg/Swyttrid area</p>
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Carers Support Team
Tîm Cefnogi Gofalwyr

Youth Forum

Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum's [Positive Body Image Campaign](#)



[Charlotte Clark - Blaenau Gwent Youth Mayor 2019-2020](#)

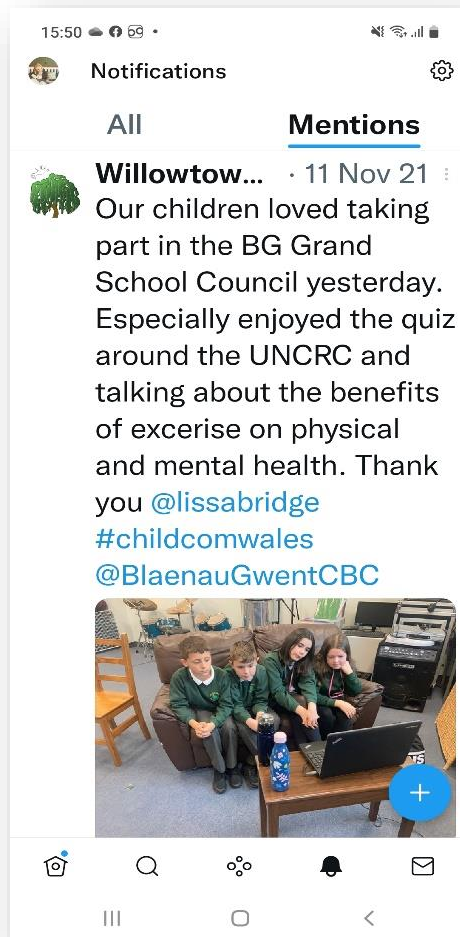


[Darcey Howells - Blaenau Gwent Youth Mayor 2020-2021](#)

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg
This document is available in Welsh



Children's Grand Council – Tweet from Willowtown Primary School



Deputy Mayor Mara Moruz's film to encourage schools to sign up to ["Let's Go Zero Campaign"](#)



Next Steps

- Support the Gwent Public Services Board to locally implement Phase 2 of its involvement programme, engaging people with protected characteristics, to support the development of the Gwent Well-being Plan.
- Safely re-convene the "Voices of Our Valleys" equality network as well as supporting other key forums to do so (e.g., 50+ Network)
- Undertake a review of Blaenau Gwent Council's Citizen Panel and progress any areas for development, prior to promotion.
- Continue to drive forward the priorities of children and young people as well supporting the development of a diverse Youth Network which enables everyone to get involved and have a voice.
- Ensure when undertaking service reviews and undertaking user research that customers covered by the Equality Act (2010) are considered.

6. Equality Objective

“We will strive to tackle inequality caused by poverty for people who have protected characteristics”

Overview (what we said we would do)

We are committed to meeting the ‘Socio-economic Duty’, as part of our Public Sector Equality Duty, which commenced in April 2020. As a Council we fully support tackling inequality caused by poverty by ensuring any big decisions made about the way we plan or deliver our services, in areas such as Education, Health and Housing, considers the needs of those *“living in less favourable social and economic circumstances than others living in the same society”* (Welsh Government).

Working alongside Welsh Government and the Equality and Human Rights Commission we will undertake research and analysis to understand Blaenau Gwent’s socio-economic position as well as strengthen our decision-making processes by developing a new Integrated Impact Assessment process.

Progress (what we did)

We reviewed our former Equality Impact Assessment process and developed a new Integrated Impact Assessment process (including guidance; screening template; full-assessment template) which has been embedded as part of our existing Corporate Reporting arrangements.

Briefing sessions were held with the Corporate Leadership Team, Members and Senior Managers to inform them of the new process and increase awareness of how socio-economic impacts are to be considered as part of the strategic decision-making process as well as the inclusion of measures to mitigate impact, when appropriate.

Several Community Impact Assessments were completed to understand the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic for key groups, such as Young People, Families with Young Children, People with Learning Disabilities, Older People, and the Armed Forces, and where equality issues had deepened. The assessments were drawn from a range of National, Regional and Local research, including socio-economic data and information (e.g., Citizen’s Advice Bureau; Housing Benefits; Food Bank usage etc.). The intelligence gained was used to inform our Recovery Planning process and future Corporate Plan.

We continue to work in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to identify gaps in support those who are socio-economically disadvantaged through the delivery of key partner programmes and projects, such as Communities4work and Elite

Employment who help people, supported by Social Services, with additional needs into employment.

Next Steps

- Continue working with Welsh Government and Equality and Human Rights Commission to ensure we are maximising equality outcomes for those who are socio-economically disadvantaged.
- Undertake a review of the effectiveness of implementing the Socio-economic Duty to improve better decision-making and take measures to make any necessary adjustments or improvements (e.g., further training, improved guidance etc.)
- Continue to work in partnership with other services and organisations to reduce inequality of outcomes for those who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

Next steps & Action Planning 2022-23

Our annual report has highlighted several of the many achievements we've made towards meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and raising the profile of the equality agenda. However, we recognise there is still more work to be done to redress inequality of outcomes for our local communities, staff, and stakeholders, which is now of even greater importance since the global Covid-19 pandemic, alongside other impacts resulting from external factors beyond our control.

We will continue to strive to build on the progress already made and deliver good practice, whilst contributing towards Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and National Goals of becoming 'a More Equal Wales' and 'a Wales of Cohesive Communities'. Looking ahead to 2022-23, preparation is underway to support several areas of new equality work such as Welsh Government's Race Equality Action Plan; LGBTQ+ Action Plan (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer +) and the National Commemoration Audit for Wales [An audit of commemoration in Wales](#) as well as potential reforms of UK National policy such as the Human Rights Act.

Some of the key actions we intend to take forward as part of our 2022-23 Action Plan includes:

- Review the effectiveness of the new Integrated Impact Assessment process and implementation of the Socio-economic Duty across the organisation to maximise equality outcomes.
- Establish mechanism for schools to monitor progress of delivery of schools' equality plans.
- Develop and implement an Equality Training Programme & Resources package accessible to the whole organisation (including basic awareness training and bespoke)
- Support the Gwent Public Services Board to locally implement Phase 2 of its involvement programme, engaging people with protected characteristics, to support the development of the Gwent Well-being Plan.
- Re-establish and strengthen existing engagement networks as well as establish new opportunities for people to get involved (e.g., Voices of our Valleys, Corporate Equality Network, Young People Network etc.)

For further information, please see [Strategic Equality Plan - Action Plan 2022-23](#)

[Strategic Equality Plan - Action Plan 2022-23](#)

Objective	Action	When
Equality Objective 1 – We will be an organisation who ensures fairness and equalities is in everything that we do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to raise the profile of the equality agenda across the organisation and embed it as “business as usual”, supported through the delivery of our 2022-23 Action Plan which will be monitored and reviewed via the Council’s business planning arrangements. 	2022-23
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the organisation receives up to date guidance and support, including the sharing of good practice, to achieve its Public Sector Equality Duty. Including the continued engagement of political and professional leadership teams and ongoing support of National and Regional equality campaigns. 	2022-23
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review the effectiveness of the new Integrated Impact Assessment 	April 2022

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This document is available in Welsh

	<p>process and implementation of the Socio-economic Duty across the organisation to maximise equality outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure equality data and intelligence, such as the findings of the Community Impact Assessments is accessible to support better organisational decision-making. 	2022-23
<p>Equality Objective 2-</p> <p>We will be an equal opportunity employer with a workforce that values equalities and diversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will test if our workforce values equalities and diversity through continued staff engagement and involvement and identify any key areas for improvement. • We will review the diversity of our workforce using our workforce data and where appropriate implement the delivery of positive recruitment drives. 	<p>2022-23</p> <p>2022-23</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and review the Equality Training & Resources Toolkit. • We will establish a Corporate Equality Network with representation from the whole organisation. 	<p>2022-23</p> <p>June 2022</p>
<p>Equality Objective 3-</p> <p>We will support children and young people, particularly those with protected characteristics, to achieve their learning ambitions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish mechanism for schools to monitor progress of delivery of schools' equality plans • Set up a schools' Equality Network. • Develop processes and protocols for the recording of bullying incidents in schools via "My Concern" and monitor and review its effectiveness. • Consider findings from the Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Is Wales Fairer?' National Report 	<p>April 2022</p> <p>September 2022</p> <p>2022-23</p> <p>2022-23</p>

	<p>regarding gaps in learning outcomes for pupils protected by the Equality Act and undertake research to determine whether these findings apply to Blaenau Gwent learners and if so, what steps need to be taken to support improvements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in partnership with other organisations and agencies continue expanding Blaenau Gwent's Children's and Young People Network to ensure opportunities to get involved are maximised and children and young people's voices are heard. • Continue working with children and young people equality groups (e.g., LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer +), Young Carers Group) and support 	<p>2022-23</p> <p>2022-23</p>
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	the development of new diversity and inclusion groups.	
Equality Objective 4- We will promote and support safe, friendly, and cohesive communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support National equality campaign (e.g., Black History Month, Holocaust Memorial) 	2022-23
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver Community Cohesion training (e.g., Hate Crime Awareness) for Corporate Leadership Team, Members, and staff. 	2022-23
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide representation and National, Regional and Local Equality and Community Cohesion Networks supporting the sharing of intelligence, learning and good practice. 	2022-23
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the delivery of the Afghan Resettlement Programme and Wider Asylum Seeker Dispersal Scheme pilot. 	2022-23

	<p>7. Support the delivery of the participatory budgeting Community Choice, Community Voice programme 2022-23 to aid Covid-19 recovery and improve area well-being.</p> <p>8. Working with our partners, post-Covid-19, support the re-building of community provisions which support community cohesion activities.</p>	<p>2022-23</p> <p>2022-23</p>
<p>Equality Objective 5-</p> <p>We will ensure there is meaningful involvement with people who have protected characteristics and key stakeholders that represent their interests.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the Gwent Public Services Board to locally implement Phase 2 of its involvement programme, engaging people with protected characteristics, to support the development of the Gwent Well-being Plan. Safely re-convene the “Voices of Our Valleys” equality network. 	<p>Summer 2022</p> <p>Summer 2022</p>

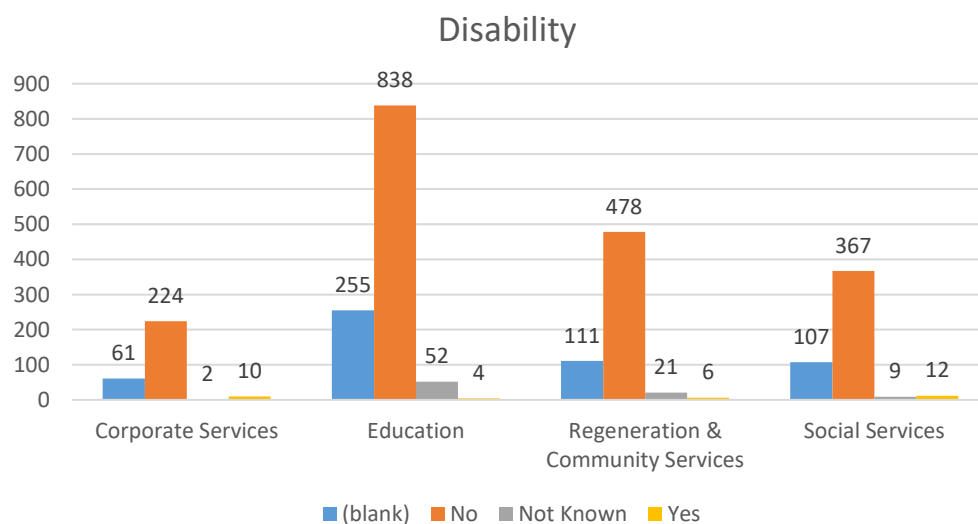
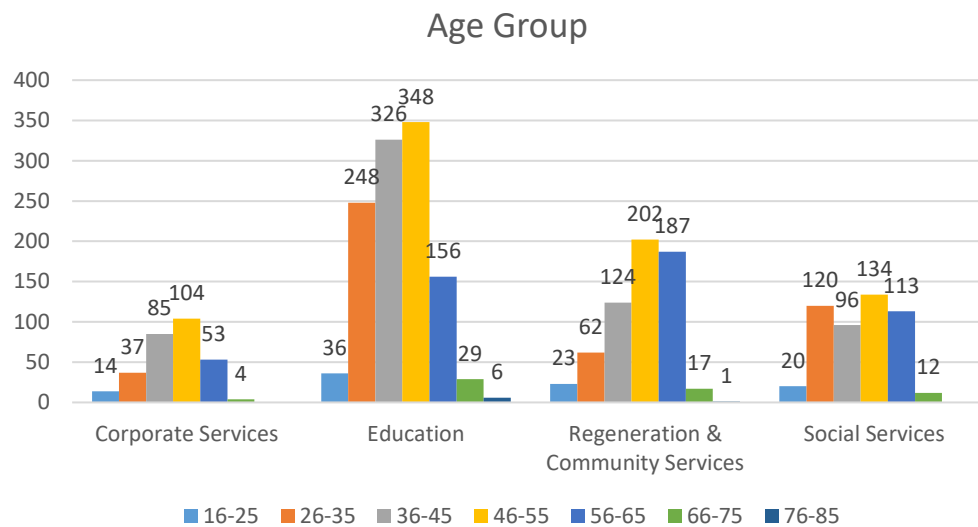
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a review of Blaenau Gwent Council's Citizen Panel and progress any areas for development, prior to promotion. • Continue to drive forward the priorities of children and young people as well supporting the development of a diverse Youth Network which enables everyone to get involved and have a voice. • Ensure when undertaking service reviews and undertaking user research that customers covered by the Equality Act (2010) are considered. 	<p>April 2022</p> <p>2022-23</p> <p>2022-23</p>
Equality Objective 6-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue working with Welsh Government and Equality and Human Rights Commission to 	2022-23

<p>We will strive to tackle inequality caused by poverty for people who have protected characteristics</p>	<p>ensure we are maximising equality outcomes, under the Socio-economic Duty, for those who are socio-economically disadvantaged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a review of the effectiveness of implementing the Socio-economic Duty to improve better decision-making and take measures to make any necessary adjustments or improvements (e.g., further training, improved guidance etc.) • Continue to work in partnership with other services and organisations to reduce inequality of outcomes for those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. 	<p>April 2022</p> <p>2022-23</p>
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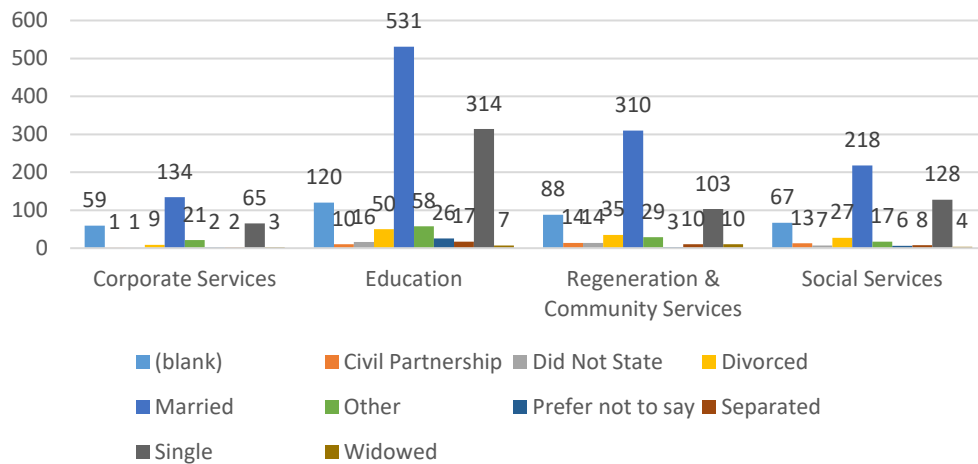
Appendix

Workforce Equality Data Summary

Appendix Equality Monitoring Data: 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 Please note numbers fewer than 5 have been omitted for certain measures to ensure anonymity



Marital Status



Ethnicity

