

Appendix 1

Caerphilly County Borough Council Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2023-2024

Approved XX 2025

This report is available in Welsh, and in other languages and formats on request.

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatau eraill ar gais.

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Contents:

Introduction.....	2
About Us	3
Context and Legislation	5
How We Meet the Duty.....	6
Collection of Council Performance, Data and Information	7
Inclusive Engagement and Participation (Equality Objective 4)	9
Equalities Promotion Work and News Stories	17
Case Studies	29
Employment Monitoring Data	37
Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024	39

Progress against the Objectives and Actions:	40
Equality Objective 1 - Service Planning and Delivery - Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services	41
Equality Objective 2 - Education, Skills and Employment - Improve education opportunities for all	53
Equality Objective 3 - Community Cohesion - Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities.....	61
Equality Objective 4 - Inclusive Engagement and Participation - Engage with citizens to encourage participation, to have their voices heard when planning service delivery	73
Equality Objective 5 - Welsh Language - To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements	81
Equality Objective 6 - Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce - Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough.....	88
Equality Objective 7 - Reducing the Gender Pay Gap	95

Introduction

We want to create a council – and a community – here in the Caerphilly county borough where everyone is respected and treated equally and fairly in all aspects of life.

It is important that we reflect this ethos in everything we do, at all levels across the whole organisation.

We must remove any barriers that prevent our residents from accessing our services, and this report evidences how the Council is working towards this. We will continue to work together to ensure the key actions continue to be implemented to help deliver positive outcomes for all.

The council will continue to strengthen its approach to equality and diversity through staff training and development, adopting good practice from elsewhere and by learning from partners.

Dave Street, Interim Chief Executive, Caerphilly County Borough Council

The needs of our communities are constantly changing, so it is important that we are able to adapt and flex as an organisation accordingly.

Diversity is at the heart of this change agenda and we have a collective duty to tackle all types of discrimination and encourage greater community cohesion. We must work together to create communities where everyone feels respected and safe from harassment.

As one of the area's biggest employers, we are also committed to achieving equality across all our services through positive employment practices, effective policies and learning from others.

This plan will help us achieve this and it is important that we continuously monitor and review our progress, as well as keeping all our key stakeholders updated to help raise awareness of the all the positive work that is being done.

We will continue to build on our success and take positive steps to promote equality, diversity and respect in all that we do.

Cllr. Sean Morgan, Leader, Caerphilly County Borough Council

About Us

The Caerphilly county borough covers an area stretching from the Brecon Beacons National Park in the north, to Cardiff and Newport in the south. It is bordered to the north by Merthyr Tydfil, the west by Rhondda Cynon Taf, and to the east by Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen local authorities.

We provide services to approximately 176,000 residents living across a mixture of urban and rural communities, living in 76,000 households. The 2021 Census showed that 40.9% of our population is aged over 50 years; we know that this figure will increase proportionately as life expectancy increases.

The Council is the 5th largest local council in Wales and is the largest employer in the area. The Council employs just over 8,000 staff with 73% of them living in the county borough. They are employed into a variety of different roles within service areas which make up the following Directorates:

- Corporate Services and Education
- Social Services and Housing
- Economy and Environment

In relation to protected characteristics we have growing diversity in terms of ethnicity and national identity, and more people are more open to stating their gender identity and sexual orientation. We have a higher proportion of people with no qualifications than the Wales average, 24.1% as compared to 19.9% for Wales, and a lower proportion of people with level 4 qualifications or above, 25.3% as compared to 31.5% for Wales. However, the economic activity of our population is broadly comparable to the Wales average with 53.2% of females and 60.6% of males in work. Changing working patterns show that 23.9% of people now work mainly from home, with 59.7% travelling to work by car or van. 4% of our residents have served in either the UK regular or reserved armed forces.

The Directorates are headed by Corporate Directors who together with the Chief Executive, and Deputy Chief Executive, make up the Corporate Management Team who oversee the delivery of the Council's business, including delivery of this plan.

The Council operates a cabinet style of local government which is led by a Leader and who is supported by 9 Cabinet Members. We have 69 elected Councillors who have a variety of roles including agreeing the Council's policy framework, council tax and budget.

The Council delivers over 600 services to the county borough to ensure our people and place are thriving and resilient. From early years support to social care, schools to care homes, environmental protection and infrastructure, provision of social housing, planning, public protection, economic regeneration, and transport planning etc. Our breadth of responsibilities is wide ranging and increasing.

We face significant challenges, the financial outlook for the Council is of serious concern, and the projections for government financial support are worsening year on year. We must reshape and repurpose our services to ensure we can meet the challenges head on and continue to support our people and place.

Context and Legislation

The Strategic Equality Plan 2020- 2024, to which this report relates, has been developed to primarily demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

It highlights links to legislation and regulations covering the Welsh Language Standards and Human Rights issues and how it supports four of the seven aims of Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; A healthier Wales, A more equal Wales, A Wales of cohesive communities and A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. It also outlines how the council will meet its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, to advance equality and inclusion for all protected groups.

Building on our previous equalities work the plan explains to staff, citizens, stakeholders and elected members, how Caerphilly County Borough Council intends to deliver its equalities commitments whilst continuing to be an inclusive organisation that does not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

To assist us in writing our Plan, we engaged with our citizens, staff, stakeholders and elected members. We also used a range of equality information, which supported us in defining what would be our equality objectives for the next 4 years, and by listening to them, we hope that these objectives are both meaningful and achievable for us to deliver.

We looked at what priorities there were to consider both nationally and at a council level, and based them on what evidence we had available to us to support the work. A lot of work has been undertaken over the years into assessing our progress against the Public Sector Equality Duty through service plans and the self-assessment process.

We considered external sources of information such as reports by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Welsh Government, policies and priorities, research reports and other relevant statistics available to help us. A number of external reports undertaken by the Equality and Human Rights Commission have supported and influenced the development of our new equality objectives.

Sources of information include:

- Anti-racist Wales Action Plan
- LGBTQ+ Action Plan
- Census 2021 data

How We Meet the Duty

The Council's equalities statement makes its commitment clear:

The Council recognises that people have different needs, requirements and goals and we will work actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities, residents, elected members, job applicants and workforce.

We will also work to create equal access for everyone to our services, irrespective of ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religious beliefs or non-belief, use of Welsh language, BSL and other languages, nationality, responsibility for any dependents or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified.

Respect for diversity is a key issue as our communities change and develop in the 21st century. We must respect what has been before and the achievements up to that point, but we must also accept and respect that things have changed and continue to evolve. We must be respectful for every individual who lives or works here, who represents or who visits the county borough.

Council services must reflect these diverse needs and Caerphilly County Borough Council already has a strong background in delivering accessible services in a sensible, measured and cost-effective way. Local government finances are increasingly under challenge and any changes must take into account the impact on the most vulnerable in society through Integrated Impact Assessments, which carry the full authority of the Strategic Equality Plan.

This Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report evidences the monitoring undertaken to review the impact of the progress we have made to meet the actions of the Equality

Objectives. Relevant information is collected from internal and external sources including public consultation exercises, Census data, local hate crime data or Integrated Impact Assessments. This report once approved, will be published and promoted widely both internally and externally to raise awareness of the work being undertaken.

Collection of Council Performance, Data and Information

The Council's Performance

The Council continues to deliver against the actions set in the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024, focussing on making services as accessible as possible and to engage more with our residents.

The Council developed an Integrated Impact Assessment Template in April 2021, in accordance with the Socio-economic Duty. This has helped ensure that services understand and consider the impact any proposals have on protected characteristics, the Welsh language, the Socio-economic Duty, and the Future Generations Act. By linking the assessment to the reports going forward for a decision, it ensures that decision-makers are well informed and able to understand the impacts when it comes to our decision-making process.

The Council has integrated equalities and Welsh language into the Directorate Performance Assessments (DPAs) so that when reporting on progress by directorate, there is an integrated view of service delivery.

The Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2023-2024 shows that we did not receive any complaints or Welsh Language Commissioner investigations which related to the Welsh Language during this financial year.

The Council has published its second Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027, and this can be viewed on the website along with all supporting documentation - <https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/my-council/strategies,-plans-and-policies/equalities/welsh-language-strategy>.

There was another increase in the number of Welsh speaking staff recorded on our HR system for 2023-2024 across all three directorates. There was also an increase in the number of staff learning Welsh across the organisation with 96 recorded.

Collection of Relevant Information

When considering and gathering information to include in the annual report, we used the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 Action Plan as a template. Service areas hold information that could assist the council in identifying how it is meeting the General and Specific Duties, Heads of Service were contacted and asked to provide a progress update for their service area against each of the relevant actions.

We looked at council reports that had been written during the 12 months to gather relevant information to provide the bigger picture of the work undertaken, and which shows equalities at the heart of the decision-making process. Most council reports had a completed Integrated Impact Assessment to evidence the equalities considerations of the proposal.

We also used employment monitoring data, which is provided via the council's HR system. The employment data provided within this report also includes teachers and school-based employees.

The Strategic Equality Plan Action Plan 2020-2024 ended on 31st March 2024, with a new Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 being adopted. The new Plan can be accessed via the Council's website:

[Caerphilly County Borough Council - Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028](#)

Sources of Information

When considering what information should be used, it was important that areas of good practice were identified across service areas to demonstrate that a commitment to delivering equality exists throughout the Council. Information used in this report includes:

- The Council's Corporate Plan (2018-2023)
- Service delivery/projects (2023-2024)

- Employment practices
- Consultation and engagement programme
- Integrated Impact Assessments (2023-2024)
- Employment monitoring information (2023-2024)
- Monitoring and delivery of the SEP Action Plan (2023-2024)
- Annual Self-Assessment Report (2023-2024)

Non-Collection and Effectiveness of Information

Equalities and particularly Welsh Language data is reported in the Council's Performance Dashboards. The Welsh language data shows growth trends in the numbers of Welsh speaking employees and is published every year in the Council's annual self-assessment. This is an evidence-based evaluation of how effective the Council's organisational activities are, as required by the Local Government and Elections (2021) Act.

The Self-Assessment is reported to Governance and Audit, Joint Scrutiny and Cabinet, prior to publishing.

In response to a request by Joint Scrutiny in 2022 there is now more data about the workforce on the age and gender balance across the workforce of the council. Welsh language data is well developed now within the performance reporting process, but the equalities data still needs greater inclusion on a more routine of performance reporting.

Inclusive Engagement and Participation (Equality Objective 4)

Robust consultation and stakeholder engagement has remained central to the council's decision-making processes this year, while also playing a strategic role in the Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation programme.

All consultation and engagement activity is developed in line with the council's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025, which sets out our approach for a common understanding to further improve inclusive engagement processes across the organisation, while ensuring robust and fully transparent consultation practices.

The document can be found here: [consultation-and-engagement-framework.aspx \(caerphilly.gov.uk\)](https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/consultation-and-engagement-framework.aspx)

The strategic principles of the Equalities Act 2010 and Wales specific duties, the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales (updated in 2022) and the law of consultation are embedded throughout the framework document.

Within the context of reduced budgets, effective, inclusive consultation and engagement is proving more important than ever, particularly:

In helping shape the council's Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation programme and associated projects, and

In empowering communities to become more involved in services and areas that matter most to them, and boosting community resilience through greater access to community-based services

Focussing on the latter, an example of this is the development of the Rhymney Hub (formerly Rhymney Library), which provides a central point of contact for face-to-face council services, community-based support and a venue for partners to operate from, in addition to the traditional offering of a library setting. The 'Hub' model, using an existing facility on Rhymney High Street, is helping strengthen relationships with communities and delivering services that best meet residents' needs.

While channel shift remains important, the Rhymney Hub model has highlighted how a combination of face-to-face and digital engagement is helping boost community resilience through access to community-based services.

Another example is the continued success of the Caerphilly Cares service, part of which aims to enhance community resilience by providing support and guidance to community groups across the county borough. It is acknowledged that the council may not always be best placed to deliver some very localised services; the support in community development, encouraging volunteers and more practical guidance is

helping ensure community groups are well placed to play their part in developing community-based services.

While the shift to more digital services and engagement opportunities has accelerated since the pandemic, this service is helping ensure residents have the opportunity to participate and engage in a manner they choose.

We continue to adopt a creative approach to consultation and engagement activity, ensuring that everyone can get involved and have a say in a manner that best suits them.

A blend of face to face, online, digital and more traditional engagement methods, as well as targeted stakeholder engagement helps ensure appropriate mechanisms, which is particularly important for those with protected characteristics, those who are economically disadvantaged and those who are not digitally enabled. Face-to-face engagement allows us to gain a deeper insight into understanding what matters to our communities, and we continue to work with existing networks and groups using their established methods of engagement.

Key actions that have helped in the delivery of this objective during 2022-23 include:

Focussing on the role of consultation and engagement in the Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation programme, the engagement team are members of the Programme Management Office (PMO) which has strategic oversight of all projects under the programme's banner. Further, a member of the engagement team is embedded within each of the projects to advise and support the workstream leads on robust and inclusive engagement. The importance of considering Integrated Impact Assessments at the outset of a project continues to be a priority, particularly when developing proposals which could potentially have an impact on particular stakeholder groups.

Effective engagement and consultation has been demonstrated across a number of projects delivered under the Mobilising Team Caerphilly banner to date, including ongoing Trade Union engagement, staff engagement, ongoing engagement with elected members and consultation/engagement with residents and community groups. Views have recently been sought on a number of far-reaching consultations on topics including the future of the Meals Direct Service, Llancaiach Fawr, Blackwood Miners' Institute and the Hive Restaurant at Penallta House.

In March 2023, a participation strategy and accompanying action plan was also endorsed by Cabinet to highlight the council's continued compliance with participation duty within the Local Government and Elections Act. This strategy and action plan adopts the same creative approach to consultation/participation activity to ensure residents can be involved in decisions that impact upon them. The documents can be found here:

<https://democracy.caerphilly.gov.uk/documents/s44397/Appendix%201.pdf?LLL=0>

More generally, the council's digital engagement platform Engagement HQ, which was launched in 2022 is now the premier vehicle for consultation and engagement activity. The platform provides opportunities for stakeholders to engage with 'live' consultations, as well as providing access to feedback on all previous consultations, ensuring we can 'close the loop' in how people's views have helped shape decisions and subsequent outcomes. A link to the digital engagement platform 'The Caerphilly Conversation' can be found here: <https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

While the premier engagement vehicle, we continue to take a mixed method approach to engagement, which helps ensure those who are not digitally enabled can easily get involved if they wish to do so.

For example, recent consultation activity on the council's budget setting and on the draft waste and recycling strategy saw face to face drop in sessions held at libraries and other community venues in almost every town/village across the county borough. For all far-reaching consultations, hard copy surveys are also always available from any of Caerphilly's libraries. Our stakeholder lists for those representing people with protected characteristics and other seldom heard communities also continues to expand, ensuring a proactive approach to engagement where all residents have an opportunity to be involved.

The consultation on the waste and recycling strategy also included a video clip produced for BSL users, to find out more about the opportunities to be involved. This video made use of BSL skills 'in house' through officers who have previously/are undertaking qualifications through the council: [Draft Waste and Recycling Strategy Consultation | The Caerphilly Conversation](#)

Internally, a cross-directorate engagement 'champions' working group has helped ensure the councils engagement/consultation activity is streamlined and aligned to organisational objectives, with an enhanced focus on sharing of data, insight and outcomes from these. This group are also helping ensure this data and insight is shared consistently with senior leaders across the council directorates, and that

activity is inclusive and in line with the Consultation and Engagement Framework.2020-2025.

The group also continue to be an excellent source of sharing best practice, coordinating activity and developing effective approaches to engagement and consultation across the wider organisation.

The importance of effective, inclusive engagement has been further supported through the appointment of dedicated engagement officers (funded through the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund) focussing on decarbonisation – business and community engagement, and Shared Prosperity Funded projects more generally.

These fixed term posts have proven instrumental in encouraging communities to become more involved in projects and issues that matter to them in a manner that best suits them. For example, the Engagement HQ platform is currently facilitating an interactive map of local businesses who have pledged to make a change to support the decarbonisation agenda, as well as face-to-face engagement to support the development of a Net Zero 2050 strategy. The council has also acted in direct response to a community consultation on the future of a local structure, the Twisted Chimney in the north of the county borough.

Further details of current engagement activities can be found, including links to live surveys where appropriate, and to the outcomes of recent engagement activities by visiting <https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

Snapshot of Key Decisions

The following section highlights a brief snapshot of some key decisions the Council put in place during the last 12 months. They demonstrate our compliance and commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty, Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

Corporate Plan 2023-2028

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 requires all public bodies to set Well-being Objectives to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of their area. The Council's Well-being objectives have been developed using the Sustainable Development Principle which is described as the 5 ways of working.

The Council's Well-being Objectives for 2023-2028 set out what the Council hopes to achieve on behalf of its communities, and they are:

WBO1 Enabling our Children to Succeed in Education

WBO2 Enabling our Residents to Thrive

WBO3 Enabling our Communities to Thrive

WBO4 Enabling our Economy to Grow

WBO5 Enabling our Environment to be Greener

Each Objective and the supporting outcomes are designed to be integrated with each other. For example, creating conditions for healthier and active lifestyles as an outcome in Well-being Objective 3 will help to children to succeed, as health and well-being is a building block for learning in Well-being Objective 1. The Corporate Plan was presented to the Council's Joint Scrutiny Committee on 26 October 2023. Joint Scrutiny agreed to recommend the Plan to Cabinet prior to its ongoing consideration by full Council.

The full Plan can be viewed on the Council's website: [Caerphilly County Borough Council - Corporate Plan 2023-2028](#)

Motor Neurone Disease Charter (Council 04/07/23)

In February 2023, Leader of Caerphilly County Borough Council, Cllr Sean Morgan, and Cllr Nigel George, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Property and Highways, met with the Campaign Contact of the Motor Neurone Disease Association Charter to discuss the importance of MND awareness and to explain the support they give to those living with MND, their carers, and families.

Following the first meeting, a Notice of Motion was presented to the Social Services Scrutiny Committee for consideration in May of 2023 by Cllr Nigel George. Cllr. George presented the motion and gained support of the scrutiny committee for it to be recommended to Council in July 2023, which was later successfully approved.

On the 19th of February 2024, Leader Cllr Sean Morgan, and Cllr Elaine Forehead, Cabinet Member for Social Care, were present from Caerphilly County Borough Council to sign the appropriate certificate to "Adopt the MNDA Charter". The adoption of this charter is a positive step to further support people living with the horrendous illness that is Motor Neurones Disease.

The MND Charter is a statement of the respect, care and support that people living with MND and their carers deserve and should expect.

The five points of the Charter are:

The right to an early diagnosis and information

The right to access quality care and treatments.

The right to be treated as individuals and with dignity and respect.

The right to maximise their quality of life

Carers of people with MND have the right to be valued, respected, listened to and well-supported.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.mndassociation.org/>

Pride in Veterans Standard

On 29 November 2023, Caerphilly Council adopted the Pride in Veterans (PiVS) Standard.

The Pride in Veterans Standard is a programme run by Fighting With Pride which supports the health and well-being of LGBT+ Veterans, service personnel and their families, in particular, those most impacted by the ban on LGBT+ personnel serving in the Armed Forces to January 2000. They work with Veteran supporting organisations to build capacity for LGBT+ Veteran support, to recognise their service and help resolve the challenges they face in their lives beyond military service. By adopting the PiVS, organisations need to be understanding of the experiences of LGBT+ Veterans, and how this may impact them accessing support. Organisations need to be ready and able to provide services in a supportive and empathic way that meets the specific needs of our LGBT+ community.

PiVS organisations will:

Warmly welcome LGBT+ Veterans, serving personnel and their families.

Ensure all staff volunteers and members have an awareness of the different challenges faced by LGBT+ people, particularly those who were impacted by the Armed Forces' "gay ban".

Have a clear understanding of the needs of LGBT+ Veterans, serving personnel and their families and tailoring support to meet their needs.

Recognise, that for some LGBT+ Veterans, their experiences have impacted their mental health, and tailor support to meet their needs.

Promote inclusion, dignity, and respect for LGBT+ people in everything that you do.

Recognise the different groups within our community and understand their specific needs

Caerphilly County Borough Council already demonstrates its support for the Armed Forces community and to the LGBT+ community, this is evidenced through signing up to the Armed Forces Covenant and our ongoing work with Proud Councils. More recently through hosting our very own Pride Caerffili, the first and only council-led Pride event in Wales, which was a massive success. By adopting the Standard further demonstrates the Council's commitment to supporting Veterans in the county borough regardless of their protected characteristics.

Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 (Cabinet 06/03 Council 18/04/24)

In October 2023 we launched a consultation exercise on the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 – Objectives and Actions.

The Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 was developed to primarily demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. The Plan includes 7 equality objectives that outline how Caerphilly County Borough Council intends to deliver its equalities commitments, whilst continuing to be an inclusive organisation that does not tolerate discrimination.

The consultation aimed to seek the views on the proposed Equality Objectives outlined within the draft Plan, and to identify key actions for delivering these objectives moving forward.

The Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 was approved by full Council in April 2024. To view the Plan please click on the link - [CCBC - Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028](#)

Summary

Detailed examples of what went well in 2023-2024 are detailed in the Council's Annual Self-Assessment 2023-2024. To view the report click on the link –

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/my-council/strategies,-plans-and-policies/improvement-plan/performance-report?lang=en-GB>

Equalities Promotion Work and News Stories

In 2023-2024, the Council marked several awareness days either by raising awareness through press releases and or social media posts. The following were celebrated/marked either publicly or internally with staff:

April 2023

Free Wi-fi in town centres

Blackwood town centre became the latest town to benefit from free public access Wi-Fi. A part of a wider provision that has already been rolled out in Bargoed, Rhymney, Ystrad Mynach and Risca – the initiative aims to improve the experience for visitors of the high street by helping people to access online stores and to engage with local businesses online. Newbridge and Caerphilly now also benefit from free public Wi-Fi. [Blackwood becomes the latest town to launch free public Wi-Fi](#)

May 2023

Review of Local Toilets Strategy

A review of the 2019 Local Toilets Strategy set out several options for consideration to increase the provision of local toilets, which have been successfully incorporated by the Council. These include the Council working with third parties to successfully re-open the former CCBC public toilet facilities at Bargoed, Risca, Blackwood, and Caerphilly Bus Stations. The Council has also worked with Gelligaer Community Council, to successfully re-open the toilet facilities at the bus stops in Ystrad Mynach and in Nelson.

Toilet logo stickers are also being displayed at entrances to appropriate Council buildings where toilets are accessible without entering secure work areas and stickers are provided to partner locations for display.

[Council makes strides to ensure public toilets remain accessible to all](#)

Symbol-based Communication Boards

Parks in Caerphilly county borough now have innovative symbol-based communication boards. The boards aim to support interactions, play and fun between

children of all ages and abilities, their peers and families during their time at play parks and promote inclusion for all children.

Caerphilly is one borough set to receive boards as part of a roll out of 300 communications boards across Wales. This has been made possible thanks to £26,000 funding from the Welsh Government's [Talk With Me](#) programme, which shares speech, language, and communication skills advice with parents and caregivers for children aged between 0-5.

The visual boards are one of many alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) methods developed for children who have speech, language and communication difficulties - these could be children with cerebral palsy or autism spectrum conditions – to offer an alternative method of communication instead of speech.

Parks set to receive communications boards in the Caerphilly county borough include Morgan Jones, Abertridwr, Ystrad Mynach, Nelson Wern, Bargoed, Llanbradach, Rhymney, Blackwood Showfield, Waunfawr and Risca.

[Caerphilly parks to host innovative communications boards](#)

Windrush 75 Grants Scheme

The Windrush 75 Grant aimed to help support events that celebrate our Windrush Generation and contribute to the Welsh Government's commitment to deliver an anti-racist Wales by 2030. The Council invited applications for people and organisation to access Welsh Government's Grant Funding to mark 75 years since MV Empire Windrush docked in Tilbury. This moment symbolises the Windrush Generation and crystallises how migration to Wales has shaped our society today. This year, it was especially important that we celebrated, and recognised its wide historic, and present-day significance.

Windrush Celebration Day recognises and celebrates the contributions of men and women from across the Commonwealth who helped to build a modern Wales and made this country their home.

June 2023

Ffiliffest

A free entry fun-packed Welsh language festival which was held on the Owain Glyndwr Playing Fields on Crescent Road, Caerphilly on Saturday June 10th.

Ffliffest is Menter Caerffili's summer celebration of the Welsh language and of local Welsh culture with the event including performances, entertainment, activities, workshops, food and drink stalls and a chance to buy produce from local businesses.

This year the festival continued until 7:00pm, with performances by Welsh language musicians Martyn Geraint, Allan yn y Fan, Caerphilly Male Voice Choir, Morgan Elwy, Wonderbrass, Melda Lois, Paid Gofyn, Iestyn Gwyn Jones a Kizzi Crawford as well as performances by local children and young people.

Pride Cymru

As part of Pride Month, Council staff, along with other members of Proud Councils attended the annual Pride Cymru march through the streets of Cardiff. This was a great way to talk to other organisations about our work leading up to our very own Pride Caerffili the following week.

Pride Caerffili

Pride Caerffili was a huge success as Caerphilly town centre was filled with rainbow flags, banners and bunting to celebrate its first-ever Pride event and the only Council-led Pride event in Wales.

Caerphilly town centre and Castle Court shopping centre welcomed an outstanding 23,957 visitors on the day. Several organisations including Gwent Police, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service and Caerphilly Runners had pre-registered to be a part of the celebration but hundreds more flocked to the town centre and joined the festivities on the day.

The daylong celebration on Saturday 24th June started with a parade through the town centre which began at St Martin's School. The parade filled with people from all organisations and communities walked down Cardiff Road and passed the iconic Caerphilly Castle before finishing in the Twyn car park for exciting entertainment.

Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2023-2024

The Council published its Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2023-2024, following approval by Cabinet on 5 June 2024. The report evidences our progress to

meet the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards included in the Council's Compliance Notice.

The annual report highlighted the following performance information:

We didn't receive any complaints or investigations about the Welsh language during this financial year. This is the fifth year in a row that we haven't been subject to a Welsh Language Commissioner investigation for non-compliance.

We promoted and celebrated a few different Welsh language activities during 2022-2023 including:

Diwrnod Shwmae – staff and residents of Tŷ Iscoed residential home got involved with a Welsh language course

Welsh Language Rights Day – we promoted Welsh language services and encouraged members of the public to access services in Welsh

We continued our work supporting Careers Wales with talks at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni, St Martins School, Islwyn High, and St Cenydd Comprehensive. The talks were delivered to Years 10 and 11 regarding career and apprenticeship opportunities with the Council, and emphasis on how important Welsh language skills are to employers.

The partnership working with Careers Wales and schools in the county borough earned us a nomination and shortlisted as finalists in the Careers Wales Valued Partner Awards. Although we did not win the award, it was a great achievement for the Council to be recognised for the work that has been done over the years and will continue to do in several schools in the county borough.

The Council's Translation Team translated 2,175,562 words this financial year. That's over 700,000 words more than last year, thanks to the additional capacity in the team.

The number of staff recorded as having Welsh language skills rose from 2,100 to 2,258 during this financial year. With the roll-out of the Welsh Language Skills Audit in April, we hope next to year to be in a position where we can map and detail every member of staff with Welsh language skills, and provide them with the necessary support to encourage them to use those skills confidently in the workplace.

The number of staff learning Welsh increased again during this financial year to 96. We have changed the process of registering on courses, which is much more streamlined. We have also been working a lot more with service areas, particularly the Employability Team, who have all attended a Welsh course and are a great example of how to embed Welsh language into everyday work.

Out of 685 new and vacant posts advertised only 9 of these were advertised as Welsh Essential, 13 posts were advertised where Welsh language skills needed to be learnt when appointed; 663 posts advertised as Welsh Desirable; and 0 where Welsh language skills were not required. All posts are advertised with a default of Welsh desirable as a minimum.

July 2023

Free School Meals – Holiday Payment

On Wednesday 28 June 2023 Welsh Government informed Council's across Wales that they would no longer provide Free School Meal Holiday payments, with immediate effect.

This announcement generated a lot of feedback from families who were relying on this payment. Caerphilly Council's Cabinet agreed to provide a one-off payment of £19.50 per week, per child, to eligible families for the school holiday period commencing Friday 21 July 2023 and ending on Thursday 31 August 2023. This decision has been taken to cushion the impact of late withdrawal of funding by Welsh Government.

Youth Work Week – Silver Quality Mark

Caerphilly's Youth Service has achieved a Silver Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government and Education Workforce Council.

The achievement recognises that the work of the service is underpinned by a sound range of policies and enables young people to learn and develop personal and social skills.

Caerphilly's Youth Service had already obtained the Bronze Quality Mark but has now officially been awarded the Silver Quality Mark that demonstrates the continued commitment of the service to continue to improve the standards of the service.

The Education Workforce Council paid tribute to the dedication of the Council's youth workers, encouraging the service to gain the Gold level of the award before the end of the year. It has also been requested that the service's curriculum planning arrangements be shared across Wales as good practice.

September 2023

Recycled Items to tackle Social Isolation

Caerphilly County Borough Council and Wastesavers have joined forces with mental health charity Growing Space to run a recycling programme that delivers new skills,

employment support, and volunteer opportunities for residents across Caerphilly County Borough.

Using a designated space at Penallta Reuse Shop, Growing Space now operates an educational program that includes both accredited and non-accredited qualifications for participants.

As part of the programme participants learn the valuable skills needed to upcycle household items that would otherwise be left for landfill. Last year alone, Wastesavers saved tens of thousands of household items (more than 620 tonnes worth) from being dumped in skips. These items are restored and then used as stock at the Wastesavers Retail stores.

This partnership tackles social isolation by providing opportunities for growth through employment, volunteering, new skills and a sense of self-worth.

Launch of Multiply Programme

Multiply is a new programme, designed by the UK Government, to help transform the lives of adults across the UK, by improving their functional numeracy skills and has launched in Caerphilly County Borough Council!

The Multiply programme had a very successful launch event at Idris Davies School, in partnership with Community Focused Schools, where a number of organisations including Careers Wales, Families First, Caerphilly Cares and Communities First were in attendance.

As well as various stalls, visitors could take part in fun activities, see educational displays and enjoy the entertainment provided.

October 2023

Partnership approach to help employees to thrive

A range of employers and organisations from across the Caerphilly county borough have been finding out how they can support local people who are currently working and in receipt of certain benefits.

A special partnership event, hosted by Caerphilly Council at their Penallta House HQ, highlighted the support that is available to employers and their employees from the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP), the council and a range of other partner organisations.

The event focused on promoting the support that is available including mid-careers reviews & personal learning accounts, myth busting around the 16-hour limitation to accessing Universal Credit and promoting supplementary benefits including Carers Allowance and Pensions Credit and how employees can access these whilst in work etc.

As a key partner of DWP, Caerphilly County Borough Council shares their ambition to support customers who are currently working and in receipt of Universal Credit as well as their employers.

Which Way Now – Careers Event

The popular Which Way Now? Event, hosted by Caerphilly County Borough Council, returned on 25th October 2023.

Previously, the event has attracted hundreds of young people who are seeking employment, education, or training opportunities. This time, it was open to anyone in the public over the age of 16 who is unemployed or job searching that wanted some employment information and support.

Which Way Now? is in partnership with Careers Wales and is jointly organised by CCBC's Youth Service and Caerphilly Employability Programmes, which aims to support school leavers and young people who are looking for advice and inspiration on what career path to take next. It also aims to focus young people on upcoming exams and shows them potential careers they could go into.

There were a diverse range of employers and training providers attending who offered a wide range of advice, training, job opportunities and even some opportunities for same day interviews.

Black History Month

To raise awareness of Black History Month, we posted a message on our social media platforms and sent an information pack via the Community Cohesion team to schools in the School Bulletin with information and ideas for lessons.

Diwrnod Shwmae

Following a 10-week course for staff at Tŷ Iscoed Residential Home, we spoke to the residents about the Welsh language and what it means to them. The course was a great success with the staff who took part now able to express themselves using basic phrases.

November 2023

Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 – Consultation

Caerphilly County Borough Council sought views on the proposed Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028.

This consultation aims to seek the views on the proposed Equality Objectives outlined within the draft Plan, and to identify key actions for delivering these objectives moving forward.

CCBC Signs Armed Forces Covenant

Caerphilly County Borough Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant on Thursday 2nd November solidifying its commitment to the armed forces community.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served in the armed forces are treated fairly. The Covenant is a voluntary pledge to support the welfare, employment and education of the armed forces community and their families.

Caerphilly County Borough Council joins more than 10,000 organisations across a range of sectors including education, charity, hospitality, retail and financial services that have committed themselves to providing fair treatment for veterans, serving personnel and their families.

Safeguarding Week 13-17 November

National Safeguarding Week (13th – 17th November) is an opportunity for organisations who work with vulnerable adults and children to come together to raise awareness of important safeguarding issues. Safeguarding isn't just an issue that

applies to social workers or other professionals – it's essential that we are all aware of our duty to protect those in our communities who might be at risk of abuse or neglect.

Every child and adult in Caerphilly County Borough has the right to live in a safe society, free from violence, fear, abuse, bullying or discrimination and we all have a role to play in achieving that. National Safeguarding Week is an important week in the calendar when multi-agency partners come together to learn best practice and share information, underlining our commitment to ensure that people living in the county borough are safe and protected.

Shortlisted as finalists for Careers Wales award

Caerphilly County Borough Council was shortlisted for a Careers Wales Valued Partner Awards 2023 in the Best Promoter of Welsh in the Workplace category due to its work providing careers support to pupils in local schools, including providing careers support to pupils in local secondary schools. The main focus of the work has included holding year group assemblies, smaller group discussions, and whole year group discussions in Welsh and English medium secondary schools regarding the value of Welsh language skills to employers, opportunities to speak Welsh in the community, and career opportunities with the Council.

These highly anticipated awards are a chance for Careers Wales to recognise employers who have worked with them to deliver impactful and engaging careers experiences to pupils in Wales over the last 12 months.

December 2023

Welsh Language Rights Day

In December, we put out a series of social media posts encouraging members of the public to use their Welsh with council staff, whilst incorporating the Welsh Language Commissioner's campaign materials.

We also held a Clwb Clebran (Welsh Chat Club) and invited Coleg Gwent to join us on Welsh Language Rights Day. This club helps us to encourage staff to use Welsh wherever possible and register staff onto courses. A video was produced at the event, where we recorded staff talking about the importance of Welsh in their day-to-day work and posted this on our social media channels.

January 2024

St Dwynwen's Day

On Dydd Santes Dwynwen 2024, we put out social media posts with links explaining the story of Santes Dwynwen and encouraged members of the public to use Welsh language phrases.

Holocaust Memorial Day

This year, we looked at what is Holocaust Memorial Day, posting a link on our social media pages to an explanatory video on the holocaust and the importance in remembering the events of World War II. We recognised the day by uploading a post remembering the millions of people murdered in the Holocaust, under Nazi Persecution, and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur.

Ukrainian Gratitude Orchard planted

An orchard has been planted by Ukrainian refugees in Caerphilly to show their enduring gratitude to the Welsh people who warmly opened their hearts and homes following the Russian invasion.

The special event for the Ukrainian Gratitude Orchard took place on Saturday 27 January 2024 at Morgan Jones Park, marking the upcoming 2nd anniversary of the Russian invasion in Ukraine. The event showcased Ukrainian culture and was accompanied by Ukrainian music. Refugees also sang Calon Lân to express their gratitude to Wales.

February 2023

LGBTQ+ History Month

With our second upcoming Pride Caerffili event in the summer, we wanted to pull the LGBTQ+ community together in LGBTQ+ history month at a social event to see what other people would like to get out of Pride Caerffili. We were joined by businesses such as the local Asda who were keen to take part and local PCSOs.

Improving Social Housing Applications

The council has been working with housing association partners to review its existing Common Allocation Policy; with the aim of making it easier for people to apply for social housing whilst also helping to address the housing crisis.

Since the introduction of Caerphilly's Common Housing Register in December 2016 the number of people waiting to be housed in the social sector in the borough has increased by almost 160%. Homeless presentations and Council allocations to temporary accommodation are also currently at an unprecedented level.

The review is expected to be completed by the end 2024 and a new policy will be prepared. Those people affected by the introduction of a new policy will have the opportunity to let the Council know their views during a consultation exercise, which will take place during the summer. The new policy will need to be agreed by the Council before being implemented in early 2025.

Support through cost of living crisis

The Caerphilly Cares Service offers access to a wide range of support initiatives for individuals and families who are vulnerable or in financial crisis. The service is an opportunity for residents of the county borough to contact the Caerphilly Cares Team which provides residents with a single coordinated access point for information, advice and assistance.

There are a number of initiatives available through the Caerphilly Cares Service which may offer wraparound support to families, especially in the wake of the withdrawal of Welsh Government funding for free school meals holiday payments.

Referrals to Caerphilly Cares may be made via the Caerphilly Cares Gateway, please use the following details to get in touch: Tel: 01443 811490

Text: SUPPORT to 07537 414443

Email: caerphillycares@caerphilly.gov.uk

Website: www.caerphilly.gov.uk/CaerphillyCares

March 2023

St David's Day

On 1 March, we posted 2 social media posts. The first was relating to St. David's Day and how people can get involved with the national campaign of #RandomActsOfWelshness including a link to more information and a YouTube video.

The second was incorporating the day as a part of the wider Council message to encourage residents to recycle their food.

Gender Pay Gap 2023

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, all organisations listed at Schedule 2 to the regulations that employ over 250 employees are required to report annually on their gender pay gap.

Other organisations in the private and voluntary sectors with 250 or more employees will need to comply with the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017. Click on the link to view Caerphilly Council's [Gender Pay Gap Statement 2023](#).

International Women's Day

Council staff and elected members celebrated International Women's Day by taking part in a video highlighting some roles within the organisation held by women. You can view the video via this link - <https://youtu.be/TNiM2CU2p34>

The council also hosted a Menopause Webinar for staff and elected members

Autism Reality Experience Bus

The Autism Reality Experience is an innovative, immersive and hands on training experience which has been developed to give non-autistic people an experience of the sensory processing difficulties faced by some people on the autism spectrum.

The bus visited the council offices and staff, and elected members were given an experience like no other.

To view the Council's other news stories please click on the link to search - <https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/archive-news.aspx>

Case Studies

The following case studies are examples of key local authority services delivering and making a difference to people's lives and taking the time to support vulnerable people and families to be independent, and to seek training and employment opportunities, as well as housing and benefits advice.

Case Study 1: Refugee Week

In 2021, the UK Government established the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme to support the resettlement of Afghan nationals who had assisted UK forces during the Afghanistan campaign. Under the policy, any current or former support staff (assessed to be under serious threat to life) were offered priority relocation to the UK.

This is Ahmad Farzad Noori's Story:

On 20 June 2022, my family and I arrived in the UK and for 4 months we stayed in a hotel in Grantham, England. We received a lot of help after arriving at the hotel - for example, services supported us to apply for identify cards, to set up a bank account, to register with the NHS. I was also helped to improve my English language skills.

In October 2022, I was pleased to accept an offer of accommodation in Caerphilly and moved to the beautiful town in November 2022. The area was new to us, and as my English wasn't very good, I needed some support; we were lucky to have support from the DPIA (Displaced People in Action) and Caerphilly Borough Council.

Starting a life in a new place is very difficult at first, but as a family we are extremely grateful to the UK Government and to the community of Caerphilly for all the support that has been made available to us

I am currently working as a Hub Officer for Cardiff Council; this was achieved through the support provided to us by our caseworkers.

I have been in Caerphilly for a year and 7 month - it's an excellent place to live, my family are very happy and want to thank Caerphilly Council for providing extensive support to us. We are so grateful. The support we have received has helped us to find employment, allowed our children to access an education and for us all to start a new life, in safety.

This work supports:

Equality Objective 2: Education, Skills and Employment – Improve education opportunities for all

Equality Objective 3: Community Cohesion Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities

Case Study 2: Communities for Work Plus (CfW+)

Ho Kwan Tsoi is 21 years old and lives in Ystrad Mynach. He self-referred to the Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) programme in July 2023 after hearing about it from his Father who was also accessing support through the programme.

Ho was assigned to Employment Mentor and during his time on CfW+, he completed work relevant training, had support with updating his CV and accessed barriers fund for travel costs to interviews. He successfully gained full time employment as a Deputyship Assistant with Caerphilly County Borough Council's Social Services Team in February 2024.

Ho moved to Wales from Hong Kong in 2020. He graduated from Cardiff University just before enrolling onto the CfW+ programme with a Business Management degree and was actively seeking work in a logistics or finance role. He had attended interviews with Transport for Wales and British Airways but was unsuccessful. He had experience of bar work and completed an internship whilst at university, in an office environment.

Ho was not claiming any benefits so had no income. He had a driving licence and full use of a car but was struggling to afford the funds to attend work relevant training, appropriate work clothes and travel costs to interviews. Ho is also dyslexic, which meant that learning a new language was difficult for him, but through his determination, he was now fluent in English and Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin).

Over the coming months, Ho engaged in regular appointments with his mentor, where they explored options that would help him move closer to the labour market. Ho was always attentive, enthusiastic and open to learning new things.

His mentor worked with Ho to update his CV and explained how he could tailor it towards the roles he was applying for. His mentor also introduced him to the Caerphilly Council website and encouraged him to do a weekly job search on a Thursday, when their new jobs are advertised. Ho immediately found a finance assistant role which he applied for. During his next appointment with his mentor, Ho received an email inviting him to attend an interview for the role. His mentor supported Ho to undertake some interview preparation and arranged for a CfW+ colleague to meet with Ho to undertake a mock interview. Ho attended the interview but was unfortunately unsuccessful. The feedback being that he scored highly but they offered it to someone with more experience.

Over the next few months, Ho and his mentor met fortnightly where they searched for jobs and applied for suitable roles. His mentor referred Ho to the Caerphilly Council Paid Placement scheme (The Academy) which offers people the chance of an 8-week paid placement in the Local Authority. They set to work finding a suitable department for him to gain valuable work experience to add to his CV but explained this would take time.

In the meantime, his mentor worked with the Business Liaison Officers who arranged an interview for him with a local firm called Stephens and George. Ho and his mentor explored work with agencies, civil service jobs and apprenticeships and although Ho was getting interviews, he had still not received a job offer. However, each time Ho felt more confident with the next interview and always prepared thoroughly for every interview situation.

In October 2023 Ho saw a Deputyship Assistant role with CCBC and applied for it with no support from his mentor. At the beginning of November, he received an email inviting him to an interview. Ho undertook his interview prep and identified that the role required someone to have knowledge of GDPR. Ho asked his mentor for an overview on this, so they suggested that he undertook a short online course through Highfields that will help him to gain an understanding of the subject. The course was funded through the CfW+ programme and he was able to complete it online at home.

After the interview, Ho told his mentor that a question came up about GDPR, so he was pleased to have completed the training beforehand. A few days later he received the call offering him the job. Ho was delighted and accepted it straight away.

In the next few months Ho needed to complete the appropriate starter paperwork and DBS check. As he was originally from Hong Kong, he also needed to complete a Certificate of No Criminal Conviction (CNCC) through the Hong Kong Police. His mentor supported Ho with his right to work checks to ensure that he had all the relevant documents and kept in touch with HR for updates. The CNCC took nearly 2 months to come back, but finally he was able to start work in February 2024, 3 months after being offered the job.

General employment support for Ho included: -

- Creating/updating a tailored CV
- Looking for suitable job opportunities and completing application forms
- Helping to prepare for interviews
- Using barriers funds to pay for travel expenses to interviews
- Support with sourcing work relevant training courses

Outcomes

- Completed work relevant certificates in GDPR and First Aid
- Entered employment over 16hrs

This work supports:

Equality Objective 3: Education, Skills and Employment – Improve education opportunities for all.

Case Study 3: Ukrainian Crisis

The Ukraine crisis began during March 2022. The UK Government offered several visa routes to arrivals; an extension of the visas of people already living here, the Ukraine Family Scheme whereby extended family members could apply for a 3-year visa to live and work in the UK, and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme where local families offer up a space in their homes, or self-contained accommodation to arrivals from Ukraine.

In addition, as a nation of sanctuary the Welsh Government agreed a super-sponsor route, where arrivals could apply for visas with the support and sponsorship of Welsh Government.

In terms of arrivals into the county borough many local families/individuals have offered up a room or property to Ukrainian individuals or families. By March 2024, 209 guests arrived in total via the Ukraine scheme. Of those arrivals:

38 moved on to outside CCBC

23 returned to Ukraine

71 were supported into PRS / Social housing within CCBC

The Resettlement Team supports hosts through the sponsorship and hosting process and all guests in their journey to settled life in CCBC. We provide the following support:

Initial arrival - a specific caseworker is assigned, they will support the guest/host throughout the entirety of the resettlement period, to ensure consistency and continuity with support. We visit within 24/48 hours of arrival, our Ukraine Liaison officer attends these visits for translation support, we provide initial support with setting up BRP cards, universal credit, provide some initial funds to purchase groceries, support with school applications, GP registrations, provide information about what amenities are in the locality.

We continue to provide support throughout their resettlement journey and will visit every 4-6 weeks after the initial visit. Providing employability referrals, ESOL referrals, long term goals, and move on planning.

Move on support is provided to those moving into their own accommodation, setting up bills, moving of items, DAF grants, move on grant, changing schools, addresses etc.

There is a dedicated inbox, which is monitored from 8.30-17.00 Monday - Friday, queries are always responded to in a maximum time of 24 hours / the next working

day. All guests and hosts have access to this e-mail address and can e-mail any enquiries they may have.

We also support when issues arise such as breakdowns in hosting arrangements. We offer mediation between hosts and guests and if the problems cannot be resolved. We work to rematch guests to another host when possible or support with finding temporary accommodation.

The team has also planned and supported the following events (with more planned for late 2024):

August 2023 - Attended an event that was hosted by the Parish Trust, to encourage more hosts to come onboard. Event was featured in the Caerphilly observer and was a fantastic opportunity to share positive hosting stories, to hear from both hosts and guests of their experiences.

December 2023 - Resettlement team hosted a Christmas party for all the children that have resettled in Caerphilly. Was a brilliant event, with a special visit from Santa, an opportunity for our guests to socialise with each other.

February 2024 - Orchard gratitude garden was planted, by the Ukraine conversational club, with the memorial plaque supplied by the CCBC.

We run fortnightly hub sessions, rotating around Blackwood, Risca, Bargoed and Caerphilly libraries. These hubs are opportunities for everyone who have been resettled to come along, meet the team, and discuss any concerns or questions they may have. We regularly have colleagues from Housing, Employability and DWP attend the hubs to offer advice to guests

We currently employ 5 Ukrainians in CCBC, working in a variety of different departments including resettlement support, catering, housing and schools.

This work supports:

Equality Objective 3: Community Cohesion – Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities

Case Study 4: Library Service - Empowering Our Community One Word at a Time!

Overview: A member of the public, whose mental health has fluctuated over time, has revitalised their relationship with the library through dedicated support from staff and their passion for the Welsh language. As an isolated and vulnerable individual, they found a sense of belonging and purpose within the library community, using their love for both colloquial and older forms of Welsh as a bridge to connect with others.

Actions Taken:

Welsh Language Practice: Upon discovering that several staff members had a foundational understanding of Welsh, they seized the opportunity to practice their language skills. Their enthusiasm for the language allowed them to engage with the team and fellow library users in meaningful conversations.

Participation in Welsh Language Talking Group: They regularly attend the Welsh Language Talking Group hosted by the library, where they spend hours conversing in Welsh. This involvement not only improves their language skills but also fosters connections with other community members.

Research Support: Library staff have shown exceptional patience and support by helping them explore Welsh language history, songs, and literature. The staff actively seek out resources that meet the interests of this individual guiding them towards relevant events and activities in the community.

Impact on Equality and Inclusion:

Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing: The library has become a safe haven for this individual, offering a space where they can engage socially and intellectually. The support they receive has positively impacted their mental health, reducing feelings of isolation and vulnerability.

Cultural and Linguistic Empowerment: By facilitating the individual's passion for the Welsh language, the library empowers them to embrace their cultural identity. This initiative promotes the use of Welsh in everyday life, aligning with broader efforts to preserve and celebrate the language.

Facilitating Communication: As the individual does not have access to digital communication, television, or telephone, the library staff assists them with essential tasks, such as scanning and copying written correspondence. This support helps the individual maintain connections with local representatives and participate in community life.

Conclusion: This case study exemplifies how the library service plays a vital role in supporting vulnerable individuals through language and community engagement. By fostering a welcoming environment where the Welsh language is celebrated, the library not only enhances individual well-being but also strengthens community ties. The dedication of staff to provide tailored support illustrates the library's commitment to equality, inclusivity, and the promotion of cultural heritage.

This work supports:

Equality Objective 1: Service Planning and Delivery – Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services

Equality Objective 3: Community Cohesion – Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities

Equality Objective 5: Welsh Language – To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements

Equality Objective 6: Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce – Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough

Case Study 5 – Cost of Living Support

Mr D is in his 80's, is in bad health and is scheduled for open heart surgery the first week of April. Mrs D is 76 and has terminal bone cancer. Mr D was really struggling with the physical hard work of a coal fire and said the cost of coal was becoming astronomical. They had been paying £600 for every delivery, which they required at least three times a year. They were not getting value for their money either as they were not being supplied with a good quality coal. Having been a coalman himself and worked down the mines for years, Mr D knew he was not getting a good quality anthracite as it would not burn well or stay lit, which added to the hardship of getting the fire lit and constantly having to tend to it throughout the day.

There was no radiator in the front sitting room, so it was too cold for them to sit in. Being pensioners with serious health problems and on a fixed income, they were struggling with both the cost of their current heating system and the physical labour involved (carrying heavy buckets of coal), but they could not afford to replace it.

Mr D approached Valley Heating and enquired about costs to install gas central heating, at which stage he was advised to contact the Council to ask about grants to get the work done. He spoke to the Private Sector Housing team and the Energy Efficiency Compliance Officer visited them and surveyed the property. He gave the homeowners some advice on energy efficiency and confirmed they were potentially eligible for the Energy Crisis Grant (ECG), to get gas central heating fitted and to install an extra radiator in the front sitting room. He left them the application forms and the homeowners successfully applied for the grant and were awarded £3,850 to have a gas combi boiler, room thermostat and new radiator fitted.

Outcomes:

After having a new gas combi boiler installed on February 7, 2024, Mr. and Mrs. D's lives have seen a remarkable improvement.

Warmth and Comfort:

The house now feels significantly warmer. The efficient gas combi boiler ensures consistent heating throughout their home.

With the removal of the coal fire, they no longer struggle with the physical demands of tending to it. The absence of coal dust and ash has also made the house cleaner and more pleasant.

Financial Benefits:

Although they haven't received their first gas bill yet, they can expect substantial savings. Coal-fired systems are notoriously inefficient, with up to 65% of heat lost through the chimney.

By switching to gas, they'll likely see a reduction in their fuel bills, providing much-needed relief given their health conditions.

Gratitude for ECG:

Mr. and Mrs. D express their gratitude to the ECG for their excellent work. The burden of managing the coal fire has been lifted, allowing them to focus on their health concerns.

Their recommendation speaks volumes about the positive impact the ECG has had on their lives.

Overall, this transition from coal to gas has not only improved their physical comfort but also alleviated worries during a challenging time. They wholeheartedly endorse the ECG's services for anyone in need.

This work supports:

Equality Objective 1 – Service Planning and Delivery – Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services

Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive Engagement and Participation – Engage with citizens to encourage participation, to have their voices heard when planning service delivery

Case Study 6 – Community Development Team

Valley Daffodils started as a coffee morning in the home of their founder after they had not been made to feel welcome in 'mainstream' groups. From here they have gone from strength to strength and are now in their third venue due to continued growth and expansion. They currently have over 100 people accessing their groups every week and are continuously asked to provide more sessions to fill the gap made by day

centres closing and no other offers being available. To deal with increased demand and pressures they reached out to Caerphilly Cares for support.

Valley Daffodils have been successful in receiving Community Support Fund and Direct Food Support grants as well as support to complete additional grant applications. Caerphilly Cares have been able to signpost to partners including Arts Development, who are now providing regular sessions including music and dance.

Through support from Caerphilly Cares, Valley Daffodils have been able to provide more opportunities for children and adults with disabilities to socialise with others, be involved in activities and have a voice in the decision making processes. The activities have allowed individuals to learn life skills that can help develop and improve their independence.

This work supports:

Equality Objective 1 – Service Planning and Delivery – Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services

Equality Objective 3 – Community Cohesion – Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities

Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive Engagement and Participation – Engage with citizens to encourage participation, to have their voices heard when planning service delivery

Employment Monitoring Data

The following information is high-level data of what the Council's HR / Payroll system holds as at 31st March 2024 regarding the Caerphilly CBC workforce profile, in terms of protected characteristics and language ability of staff.

- Gender, Ethnicity and Disability data is currently shown by Directorate.
- Religion or Belief and Sexual Orientation data is currently shown by corporate totals only. Data has improved during the last financial year.
- Language Ability is available by Service Area, but the data is provided here as Corporate totals for information.
- Other information has not been presented as the categories are currently showing zero records.

Gender by Directorate	Male	Female	Undisclosed
Economy & Environment	1030	1068	1
Education & Corporate Services	913	4022	0

Social Services & Housing	517	1457	0
Authority Total	2411	6258	1

Ethnicity by Directorate	White	BME	Undisclosed	Unwilling to Declare
Economy & Environment	1889	16	188	6
Education & Corporate Services	3677	42	1214	2
Social Services & Housing	1805	41	126	2
Authority Total	7083	93	1484	10

Disability by Directorate	Disabled	No	Undisclosed	Unwilling to Declare
Economy & Environment	69	1830	200	0
Education & Corporate Services	80	3633	1222	0
Social Services & Housing	70	1722	132	0
Authority Total	210	6929	1531	0

Sexual Orientation (totals)	Numbers
Bisexual	52
Gay	37
Heterosexual	3730
Lesbian	33
Other	35
Undisclosed	4688
Unwilling to Declare	95
Authority Total	8670

Religion or Belief (totals)	Numbers
Buddhist	9
Christian (All Denominations)	1306
Hindu	4
Jewish	2
Muslim	4
Sikh	3
Humanist	8
No Religion	2356
Undisclosed	4865
Unwilling to Declare	63
Other	50
Authority Total	8670

Nationality	Numbers
British (Not Channel Islands or IOM)	1204
English	102
Northern Irish	4

Irish	10
Welsh	2564
Scottish	8
Portuguese	1
Cornish	2
Other	50
Undisclosed	4717
Unwilling to Declare	8
Authority Total	8670

Language Ability (Other than English)	Numbers
Braille	1
BSL (British Sign Language)	33
French	20
German	8
Hebrew	1
Hindi	2
Italian	1
Makaton Sign Language	1
Malayalam	2
Spanish	9
Tamil	1
Turkish	1
Welsh	2258

(No staff total is recorded as some staff speak more than two languages)

Welsh Language Skills

Total Staff	Welsh Speakers	Percentage of Workforce
8670**	2258*	26.04%

*The Total Staff and Welsh Speakers do not equal the overall workforce total due to some members of staff having more than one post within the organisation and those posts are within different service areas.

**This total includes teachers and school-based employees.

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

The Strategic Equality Plan was developed to primarily demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. It highlights links to legislation and regulations covering the Welsh Language Standards and Human Rights issues and how it supports 4 of the 7 aims of Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; A Healthier Wales,

A More Equal Wales, A Wales of Cohesive Communities and A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language. It also outlines how the council will meet its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, to advance equality and inclusion for all protected groups.

Our new plan was due to be approved at the end of the 2019-2020 financial year, however the pandemic and the immediate response required by the Council meant that it was not formally agreed until October 2020. We chose seven Strategic Equality Objectives, and, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we have been able to show good progress against them. The following summary includes information that we gather to meet the reporting requirements of our 4-year plan. Our chosen objectives are:

Equality Objective 1 – Service Planning and Delivery – Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services

Equality Objective 2 – Education, Skills and Employment – Improve education opportunities for all

Equality Objective 3 – Community Cohesion – Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities

Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive Engagement and Participation – Engage with citizens to encourage participation, to have their voices heard when planning service delivery

Equality Objective 5 – Welsh Language – To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements

Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce – Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough

Equality Objective 7 – Reducing the Gender Pay Gap

We measure our progress against these objectives through an action plan and the following sections give a snapshot of the activity we have progressed during this reporting year.

Progress against the Objectives and Actions:

Equality Objective 1 - Service Planning and Delivery - Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services

This objective focuses on the provision of accessible and inclusive services to the citizens of the county borough. We will achieve this by continuing our engagement with service users to identify and eliminate barriers to services.

Barriers experienced by groups and individuals may include, accessing information in appropriate formats to suit their needs, mental health difficulties, transport, unemployment or accessibility to technology. Service areas should implement plans and strategies collaboratively to successfully address and remove identified barriers.

Education, health and mental health services, housing, social services and transport are areas which we wish to improve upon.

Empowering groups with protected characteristics to be able to access the services they need is a key focus for the Council.

Action 1	Deliver on the principles in the Customer and Digital Strategy – connect technology and knowledge to deliver excellent customer experience and opportunities
Progress	<p>Early Years has developed an accessible website with clear information to online application forms for funded childcare placements and requests for support. Families who may find online forms challenging and are more vulnerable are supported by their early years worker to complete and submit forms for funded childcare placements. Those who are in communities of interest identified for Flying Start Outreach placements have their codes generated by the business support team as they may not have the correct evidence to submit for the form due to their temporary housing status etc, however, their situation is known, and they are receiving intense support so the evidence is not needed.</p> <p>The Council uses a free subscription service for Gov Delivery Email Bulletins to convey messages. By registering for this service, residents receive key Council information direct to their email address, with hyperlinks included to take the reader to further information.</p>

Gov Delivery, email bulletin data for the period 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024 are as follows:

Welsh

- 209 email bulletins sent
- Subscribers have increased from 875 to 992 (+14.39%)
- Engagement rate (those who opened and clicked on a link in a bulletin) 67.10%
- Impressions 11700 (clicks on links) (+43% increase on previous year)
- Subscriptions have increased from 1531 to 1778 subscriptions +247 (+16.13%)

English

- 258 email bulletins sent
- Subscribers have increased from 44,112 to 47,546 (+7.78%)
- Engagement rate (those who opened and clicked on a link in a bulletin) 70.03%
- Impressions 1.24million (clicks on links)
- 185,089 subscriptions -1,230 (- 0.66%)

Continued to move critical applications to cloud services, with clear plans in progress to complete remainder during 2024-25. Continued rationalisation of applications.

PowerBI has continued to be developed across areas of the organisation to provide graphical interpretation of data.

RPA and My Council Services have continued to be used across the Council reducing repetitive tasks and improving customer experience.

A new digital platform has been purchased that will consolidate and replace the existing content management, forms, customer relationship management, and case management systems. Improving the customer journey by providing a new front door and delivering more efficient, user-focused digital services that are fully aligned with the needs of its citizens, ensuring a seamless and responsive experience across all interactions.

Digital services in school have been developed in line with Welsh Government (WG) standards. Continued review and development of

these technologies is in place, linking with current strategies and work programmes from WG.

Procurement services continue to lead on the All-Wales EdTech programme which provides a route to market for school technologies.

The all-Wales learner experience project has moved into delivery and Caerphilly continues a collaborative approach with Carmarthenshire and Blaenau Gwent.

Investment in data centre technology has allowed decommissioning of older technology, improving reliability, lowering running costs and assisting to reduce our carbon footprint.

Review of Microsoft license portfolio resulted in moving suitable licenses to less expensive Academic licenses. Reducing costs but not reducing functionality.

Governance for digital solutions has matured and the Digital Solutions Board, Digital Leadership Group and the Cloud Project Board are well established.

We continue to improve our security stance in an ever-changing environment where threats continue to be developed, and cyber-attacks are increasing. Security awareness training is delivered to all computer users annually and this is supplemented with attack simulations throughout the year, which feeds into future training developments.

In 2023/24 Audit Wales held a review of the Council's Digital Strategy. The focus was the Council's strategic approach to digital had been developed in accordance with the sustainable development principle and that it will help to secure value for money in the use of the Council's resources. Audit Wales made the following recommendations: '*Develop a strategic approach to digital*' by 'ensuring that the Council's strategic approach to digital demonstrates that it has proper arrangements to secure value for money and that the strategic approach to digital is based on a good understanding of current and future trends.

	We are already carrying out the following work performed as part of the Mobilising Team Caerphilly, to develop a Digital Vision 2027. The Digital Vision covers the areas noted in the digital strategy review and is focused on 6 areas including, customers and users, skills and resources and resources and sustainable and ethical computing so already addresses the recommendation from Audit Wales.
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Action 2	Ensure our staff have the necessary skills to deliver digital services – <i>linked to Staffing, Skills and Development Theme</i>
Progress	Training and further development is offered via the MY TIME process to enhance skills and development.

Action 3	Explore and consider adopting the Communication Access Symbol to ensure information is provided using different formats and languages including BSL
Progress	<p>The Council has a Translation and Interpretation Framework in place where service areas request translation or interpretation services via the approved providers on the framework. We are currently in discussions with the Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) regarding future translation and interpretation services.</p> <p>The new occupation contracts have been forwarded to all Caerphilly Homes contract holders, including in several different languages, audio and BSL, in line with identified language preferences.</p> <p>Housing Strategy produce documents in Easy Read format.</p> <p>A member of Housing has a level 3 BSL qualification, so we can communicate with hard of hearing clients when required.</p>

Action 4	Upskill citizens to enable greater use of digital technology to address digital exclusion
Progress	The Early Years team support vulnerable families to access support online including the loan of tablet and MiFi for health appointments and courses. Families are supported to complete online application forms for funded childcare places and the admissions portal when ready to apply for schools as well as shown how to navigate relevant websites.

The Library Service offers a free PC or laptop access to all residents who wish to access digital technology for education, learning support or for recreational purposes. We regularly survey customers to gain information on their needs and requirements – this is completed by using the biannual Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The Adult and Community Learning (ACL) service and other partner organisations use libraries to host training sessions and events to address digital exclusion.

In 2023/24 the Caerphilly Essential Skills team ran 23 literacy courses and 25 Digital Skills courses. In addition, a specific provision aimed at adults with additional learning needs delivered 30 courses including literacy, numeracy, digital skills, gardening, journalling, art, history, pottery, cooking, employability / enterprise, health & wellbeing, singing & drama.

We are constantly assessing whether adult community learning has helped the learner to progress to the next steps. On a positive note, to date, Caerphilly ACL have enrolled 1,473 residents onto courses ranging from entry level Literacy to level 3 International Computer Driving Licence.

The Adult and Community Learning service continues to offer a wide range of digital skills classes to residents across the borough. We are also able to loan out iPads and laptops to learners enrolled on ACL courses who need this facility. The new (£5.5 Million) Multiply project will offer a wide range of “numeracy” based learning opportunities to Caerphilly county borough residents, such as shopping online and using online comparison sites.

The Tenant and Community Involvement have provided tablets on loan to some of our involved tenants to help them become more digitally involve; tablets still in use but we haven't expanded the numbers. We are looking at expanding and looking at specific software to help a visually impaired tenant.

	<p>Willmott Dixon have provided 20 tablets in total to Caerphilly Cares as part of their Social Value obligations. The tablets have been distributed to local charities who are addressing social isolation.</p> <p>We have used routeware to understand digital connectivity across the authority, which we have made accessible to our residents and businesses so they can see what network connectivity is best in their area to support digital inclusion.</p>
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Action 5	Identify service needs of specific user groups; what barriers prevent access; and what actions are required to remove those barriers – use complaints and compliments
Progress	<p>The Tenant and Community Involvement Team have been involved in a project with the RNIB to train staff to be aware of tenants with sight loss issues and to be able to offer assistance; it's called Vision. Vision Friends training has been rolled out to all sheltered housing and floating support front line staff.</p> <p>We have undertaken a consultation exercise with all Caerphilly Homes tenants on the proposed closure of the decentralised housing offices as part of a transition to providing more community-based services and home visits.</p> <p>As part of the corporate 'Mobilising Team Caerphilly' work, the customer experience is being explored and will include work to identify the needs of specific user groups. The work will seek to understand the customer experience in detail, user needs and barriers so that the experience can be improved and be more responsive to all user needs.</p> <p>Caerphilly Homes Anti-Social Behaviour Team have information sessions planned for Sheltered Housing Schemes. They will take place over October and November 2024, with the purpose of making our service more accessible. The sessions were requested after an initial session was delivered to the Tenant Information Exchange. The sessions will focus on advising the residents of how to contact us, what we do and what we can't do, how we can help to signpost them on or introduce them to other services, such as Community Safety and Environmental Health and to talk to them generally about anti-social behaviour. It is an opportunity for them to ask us questions about things they are not clear on and for us to get an idea of the residents who may feel unable to report issues, either to CCBC or Police, due to them</p>

finding it difficult to use online services. Should that come up then we can advise them of best sources of support or make onward referrals if necessary.

Several similar sessions have taken place already, with groups who have been experiencing Anti-social Behaviour. Information has also been delivered to a dementia group and it went really well. Outreach team now have a single point of contact for the group and that person can come to us on behalf of group members if needed. We have also made an onward referral following on from that session and organised for Community Safety to make contact so that they can also run a session.

Annual rent survey has questions on affordability including heating costs and cost of living. Responses will help to inform our support services and their range of assistance.

Caerphilly Homes has established a multi-agency project group to assist with the review of the existing Common Allocation Policy. The project group has considered a range of data from the Common Housing Register to inform proposed changes to the policy. A process mapping workshop considering the application and rehousing process for social housing was also held with the aim of improving the customer journey. As a result of this workshop further changes were made to the new policy and equality implications were identified and discussed. This information will also be used to produce the first version of the Integrated Impact Assessment. The existing IT system will be updated in line with the change in approach and policy amendments.

People Services continue to review complaints and compliments and look for learning opportunities relating to barriers to our service. HR and Communications will support other service areas as appropriate.

The Corporate complaints digital database developed is operational. This new system will streamline our lines of communication and provide prompts where timeframes for responding need to be met or extended. The system will also improve interrogation of the data records, which can be accessed in a more efficient manner than the previous manual interrogation, to produce the information we need to learn from complaints and improve our services as an authority. An additional column has been included to our complaints database to identify which

	<p>complaints and compliments include equalities or Welsh language issues.</p> <p>Equalities and Welsh language complaints data forms part of the biannual reporting to the Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet as part of the Corporate Complaints process, and the Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language) sits on the corporate Learning from Complaints Group that meets quarterly to discuss specific and cross-cutting complaints.</p> <p>Corporate complaints are those that are due to failure of process or failure to operate Council policy correctly. These are complaints that could ultimately be forwarded to the Public Services Ombudsman or Welsh Language Commissioner for example. Code of conduct issues around staff behaviour or attitude are dealt with via internal HR processes.</p> <p>There are separate complaints processes for dealing with social services complaints and school-based complaints. The Social Services Complaints Procedure Wales Regulations 2014 outlines the procedure for handling complaints from persons receiving a service from social services. School-based complaints are dealt with by the School and Governing Body.</p> <p>During 2023-2024, we received 7 equalities related complaints, and they are broken down as follows:</p> <p>1 x Race – Resident felt the way they were treated was based on their Race.</p> <p>5 x Disability – Residents had issues with waste collections.</p> <p>1 x Disability – Pathways and pavements in a poor state of repair and difficult for people in wheelchairs to use.</p> <p>One of our Community Librarians has been involved with ‘Sparkle’ which meets in Caerphilly Children’s Centre on a Friday evening and Saturday morning. The sessions are offered to children with ALN, and they visit every couple of months to both sessions to read stories to the children.</p>
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	In early 2024, we were approached by the Council's Autism-lead to see if we could work together to make the library service more accessible to autistic customers. Staff started awareness training sessions in February and March 2024.
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Action 6	Ensure the Council's website and intranet is accessible so that people with disabilities can still engage
Progress	<p>The Early Years website connects to the Council website and has all relevant information for families in one place. The Early Years website has an accessibility tool to enable the text to be read aloud, and to convert to different languages.</p> <p>The Council is committed to making its website accessible and has a legal responsibility to ensure that our online communication both web and mobile meet the WCAG 2.2 AA standard. This ensures that people with temporary or permanent disabilities can access our content and not be excluded from any information or service.</p> <p>Our website has an accessibility statement, and the Council continues to check the level of compliance. Caerphilly.gov.uk was last tested on 9 November 2023. The test was carried out by Silktime. A sample of 125 pages of the website were tested.</p> <p>We have scored 96/100 for accessibility, 96.3% is compliant for level A WCAG 2.2 checks, 95.9% is compliant for level AA WCAG 2.2 checks, and 95.6% is compliant for level AAA WCAG 2.2 checks. Some examples of where the Council was non compliant were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure links explain their purpose (i.e. where will it take the reader to) - Identify the purpose of fields programmatically - WCAG AA 1.3.5 - Avoid using the same link text for different destinations WCAG A 2.4.4 - Add headers to tables WCAG A 1.3.1 <p>There are other technical fixes which we aim to repair such as the above points by August 2024. In addition, there has been enhancements to the WCAG guidance, which means more will need to</p>

be done to meet the standard required. The Council aims to complete this by fixing technical compliances also by August 2024.

Most PDF and Word documents don't meet accessibility standards – for example, they may not be marked up so they're accessible to a screen reader. There are several thousand PDF and Word Documents on our website such as reports, strategies, meetings documents and more. This requires training, learning and development and awareness for authors who write for the web.

We are now looking at training provision as provided through the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) for our employees who write for the web and mobile and will be able to report on the skill expansion in the next self-assessment. This will become more important when the Council's replacement Internet site is developed old and inaccessible content should not be made available.

The Council has an internal Accessibility Working Group of officers from across different service areas who meet, discuss and share good practice of accessibility issues. The group has developed intranet pages for members of staff to refer to for further guidance and training information to enable them to develop literature in an accessible manner. They also act as the Accessibility Champion within their service areas, providing support and guidance to officers regarding document accessibility related issues.

The following webpage was developed to provide users with tone of voice and style guide on how to write and format web content for the Council's website - [Web Guidance](#)

The HTML Tool developed in house moved from test to live environment in July. This is being used as the default template when creating new documents and ensures the document created is accessible from the outset.

Our Accessibility Statement is updated annually, you can read our full statement here: <https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/my-council/data-protection-and-freedom-of-information/accessibility-statement?lang=en-GB>

	<p>The internal Accessibility Group was disbanded in December as each project had been delivered and all the actions set out had been met, it felt like the right time to move from a project into normal day to day business.</p> <p>Participation Officers have been working with corporate staff to update the Housing related web pages. This will be improved as part of the Mobilising Team Caerphilly work to improve the customer experience across all service areas within Caerphilly Homes. Work on the website is ongoing.</p> <p>A new digital platform has been purchased that will consolidate and replace the existing content management, forms, customer relationship management, and case management systems. Improving the customer journey by providing a new front door and delivering more efficient, user-focused digital services that are fully aligned with the needs of its citizens, ensuring a seamless and responsive experience across all interactions.</p> <p>New Intranet has been introduced with updated sites for departments.</p>
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Action 7	Improve the collection and recording of equalities monitoring information of our citizens across council services
Progress	<p>The standard equalities monitoring questions that were updated by members of Proud Councils continue to be used for collecting relevant monitoring questions as part of consultation exercises and recruitment. These questions are consistent across Gwent. The questions are shared widely across service areas and are included and adapted to suit our consultation and engagement exercises.</p> <p>We meet this action through the implementation of the Common Housing Register (CHR) and Private Sector Housing Equality monitoring.</p> <p>In autumn 2022, as part of preparation for Renting Homes, all tenants were sent a form to update general contact details, tenancy details and language preferences, and also to let us know of any support needs. More than 5,000 tenant records were updated. Our satisfaction survey</p>

	in autumn 2023 collected information such as age profiles and areas where respondents live so satisfaction can be linked to age group and area and can help highlight potential inequalities.
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Action 8	Collect equalities monitoring information for compliments and complaints
Progress	<p>Complaints officers are aware of the requirement to complete the additional data on our complaints database to identify which complaints/compliments include equalities or Welsh language issues. The question around equalities and Welsh language is asked as a standard question when a complaint or a compliment is submitted.</p> <p>The Tenant and Community Involvement Team provide an annual report to Cabinet identifying relationships to Equalities or Welsh Language.</p>

Action 9	Survey the council's building stock (and schools) in relation to accessibility using the Local Access Group
Progress	<p>Early Years manages Welsh Government grants to support childcare settings and buildings to become accessible and to make reasonable adjustments to enable access by children and families. All new build capital projects are accessible.</p> <p>The Council owns and manages 10,700. We assess the level of accessibility of each home before it is let and best match properties with those that require the assessed level of accessibility. We also carry out adaptations to those home to improve levels of accessibility where our tenants require them.</p> <p>Nil response from Property Service</p>

Action 10	Survey polling stations in relation to accessibility using the Local Access Group
Progress	<p>The Elections Act 2022 required all polling stations to be accessible. We surveyed our polling stations prior to the recent Police and Crime Commissioner and Parliamentary elections to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Polling stations are wheelchair accessible, and ramps are provided where needed - Polling booths are adapted for wheelchair users

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large print versions of ballot papers and Tactile Voting Devices are in each polling station, to enable voters with a visual impairment to mark their ballot paper(s) independently - We provide large magnifiers/ slot highlighters on boxes - Polling stations have adequate lighting, and we provide extra lighting where required - Polling station staff wear badges so that they are easy to identify <p>We are also in the middle of the statutory review of all polling stations buildings and will be publishing the results early in the new year.</p>
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Equality Objective 2 - Education, Skills and Employment - Improve education opportunities for all

The primary aim of this objective is to ensure that our communities are well equipped to secure sustainable and well-paid employment as a means of preventing poverty.

Through ensuring our citizens are ready to enter the working environment we will prevent long-term problems associated with low skills and un-employability.

'Improve Education opportunities for all' as detailed in the Council's Corporate Plan, will be delivered using outcomes identified within the Shared Ambitions 2019-2022 Strategy. This strategy outlines the Council's commitment to work with schools and the Education Achievement Services (EAS) to improve educational attainment and achievement.

Increasing the number of citizens accessing education, training and employment will positively contribute to creating cohesive and resilient communities that will thrive. The skills agenda is fundamental to the economic development and economic prosperity of the nation, Cardiff Capital Region and Caerphilly County Borough.

Key to this will be focussing our work on reducing the number of young people who are not in employment, education and training, eliminating the economic inactivity gap;

identify the skills gaps and shortages in priority sectors, increase the number and quality of apprenticeships and improve people's perception of apprenticeships as a route into well-paid employment.

Action 1	Improve the skills of citizens by providing opportunities to gain qualifications and support to obtain employment
Progress	<p>In the academic year 23/24, Caerphilly ACL has delivered 88 Employability courses leading to qualifications e.g. ICDL, Food Safety, Forst Aid, Education & Training qual).</p> <p>1,318 people engaged with Communities for Work Plus (C4W+) and the Core Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) delivery. The breakdown of participants was as follows:</p> <p>Age</p> <p>16-24 – 428 (32%)</p> <p>25+ – 890 (68%)</p> <p>Sex:</p> <p>Female: 548 (42%)</p> <p>Male: 745 (56%)</p> <p>Prefer not to say: 25 (2%)</p> <p>Ethnicity</p> <p>76 from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background</p> <p>Health and Disability</p> <p>126 (9.5%) participants reported having a disability</p> <p>346 (26%) Reported having a work limiting health condition</p> <p>Primary Carers:</p> <p>Primary Carer of a child (Under 18) – 249</p> <p>Primary Carer of a disabled adult – 14</p>

Primary Carer of a person (65 and over) – 5

Other primary carer (not disclosed) – 58

Welsh Language

Speak Welsh – 80

Read Welsh – 84

Understand Welsh – 104

Write Welsh – 74

1 client requested service delivery in Welsh.

Through the Multiply project we have ensured that the 'Active Offer' in Welsh has been included. Some of the interventions were procured out, including ALL of them through the medium of Welsh. Coleg Y Cymoedd were successful in the procured process and have been working with other partners including Menter Iaith Caerffili, to deliver as much as they can through the medium of Welsh.

It has been difficult to run BSL courses this year due to lack of BSL teaching staff, so instead to support people we ran BSL coffee mornings instead. We worked in conjunction with Caerphilly Cares who have a staff member who uses BSL. *'These coffee mornings are for anyone with an interest in BSL including those want to practise, parents of children who use or are learning BSL, current learners, those who need a refresher, and anyone else with an interest'. These sessions were advertised as non-accredited informal 'meet-ups'.*

Other examples of support provided in the delivery clusters for participants, some of whom may have WRHC and disabilities and may have been out of work for long periods of time or are economically inactive. These are short courses and workshops run alongside employability support on a 1-2-1 basis, not standalone and specifically for those who are enrolled on the Employment Programme.

'Heads Up Outdoors':

Demystifying stress and stress related conditions, working with unhelpful thinking patterns and regulating emotions through and with nature. This then led on to four nature-based workshops where

participants were taken to Parc Cwm Darren to participate in emotional regulation and native tree ID'ing, native bird species and managing unhelpful thinking patterns, experiencing flow in nature through heritage craft, building confidence through camp craft skills and navigating in nature and moving forward positively.

'Heads Up online':

Course covered demystifying stress and stress-related conditions, managing unhelpful thinking patterns, practicing self-compassion, practical self-care and moving forward positively through self-confidence and motivation.

Short workshops to support participants with barriers they are facing - Healthy Relationships looking at how to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships, sexting, exploitation and pornography. This course was attended by participants looking to work in support roles as well as supporting participants with personal issues.

'A for Anxiety'

This workshop looks at what anxiety is, how it can present itself, why we get anxiety and how we can deal with it which is one of the main barriers to employment at present. This is a course we run regularly as it is well attended, and we receive excellent feedback from participants about the tutor and course content.

Workshops are aimed at participants age 50+ in conjunction with the Job Centres in Bargoed, Blackwood and Caerphilly - the job centres refer participants to the sessions, which are to encourage confidence in individuals to not be afraid to look for work, and to help overcome any barriers they feel that are in their way. It aims to give them tools to look for the right career, CV writing, job searching support and interview techniques.

Caerphilly Employment Support aims to assist jobseekers across the borough to find suitable employment regardless of their barriers to a work life.

Barriers can range from needing to arrange childcare, using public transport, to managing specific learning difficulties, work-limiting health conditions, disabilities or poor mental health.

As part of supporting as many residents as possible, we aim to collaborate with different organisations and support groups to ensure staff can support as wide a range of jobseekers as possible. Most recently we have been working closely with TASS (The Autism Support Service) due to a gradual increase in referrals where a diagnosis / self-diagnosis of autism or other neurodiverse conditions have been declared at point of referral.

We currently facilitate a monthly drop-in clinic at Autistic Minds, Caerphilly where jobseekers can speak to an engagement officer in a familiar and confidential environment, to discuss the support we offer and whether they would like to engage in further support with us. There is no obligation to sign up to support, but for those who do, they will be assigned a mentor who can meet them at Autistic Minds for appointments or at another suitable venue. They will have the opportunity to discuss their barriers in detail and look at the realistic steps they need to take to find a job that is suitable for them.

Mentors can offer specific support for individuals based on how far they are from the job market and their barriers to work. Recently, one mentor supported a participant with travel training to enable them to catch a bus independently and meet their mentor at Autistic Minds for their appointment. This was repeated over several weeks and to date the participant has progressed to meeting their mentor in Caerphilly Library and is now in the process of looking for employment. When the participant enters employment, the mentor will refer to TASS for supported employment and engagement with us will continue via in-work support.

Alongside supporting people who are neurodiverse, Caerphilly Employment Support are committed to furthering their understanding of the condition through training. Towards the end of 2024 into 2025, mentors will complete a four-day learning course focussing on the supported employment model and awareness sessions with Autistic Minds are being scheduled for the end of the year.

The Rent Section work in partnership with Caerphilly Cares and our employment team, we refer tenants who are work ready or require training opportunities.

The team accepted referrals and carried out “what if” and better of calculations which highlighted the impacts on benefits over a series of scenarios e.g. 10 hours worked, 20 hours, 30 hours etc.

Caerphilly Homes are in the process of creating a Construction related employment programme. Together with Willmott Dixon this programme will provide opportunities for citizens to obtain new qualifications and employment opportunities. It will also include a specific workstream for ex-military personnel who are currently on the Council’s housing register and seeking work.

The Employability Teams engagement officers have supported those with long term health conditions, work limiting health conditions, disabilities, or from ethnic minority groups to successfully complete the CCBC application process to gain employment within the care or catering sector. If needed, these individuals have also been referred on for additional support, such as to the resettlement hubs or various disability support services. They also supported a participant who is undergoing transition from male to female in applying for jobs, sensitively taking into account the gender pronouns they wish to use.

A participant with a hearing impairment was supported using a T loop system. This made the training courses they wanted to attend accessible to them, with the engagement team supporting with this.

To support individuals who are neurodiverse, we have adapted the way that we introduce mentors or other support service. An example of this is, if possible, showing the individual a photo of their new employment mentor so they know what they look like and who will be contacting them, showing them the logo, venue or social media pages of other support services, such as Autistic Minds or TASS.

An engagement officer arranged a ‘How to look after your mental health as a parent’ session in Trinant. Some people attended who were over 60 years of age and not parents. However, all attendees were

	encouraged to stay and participate which they did. One attendee was a wheelchair user, so we made sure that the venue was fully accessible.
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Action 2	Develop support for Adult Community Education to deliver digital literacy courses that will support local employability programmes
Progress	<p>In 2023/24 the Caerphilly Essential Skills team ran 23 literacy courses and 25 Digital Skills courses. In addition, a specific provision aimed at adults with additional learning needs delivered 30 courses including literacy, numeracy, digital skills, gardening, journalling, art, history, pottery, cooking, employability / enterprise, health & wellbeing, singing & drama.</p> <p>Multiply has also funded digital skills through numeracy sessions in Blackwood and Rhymney libraries.</p>

Action 3	Aim to reduce the impact of poverty by supporting citizens into improved employment opportunities and conditions
Progress	<p>In the academic year 23/24, Caerphilly ACL has delivered 88 Employability courses leading to qualifications e.g. ICDL, Food Safety, Forst Aid, Education & Training qual).</p> <p>See response to Actions 1 and 2.</p>

Action 4	Meet the targets set within the local employability programmes by upskilling and supporting citizens into well-paid work
Progress	<p>In the academic year 23/24, Caerphilly ACL has delivered 88 Employability courses leading to qualifications e.g. ICDL, Food Safety, Forst Aid, Education & Training qual).</p> <p>The Housing Team works closely with the Council's Employment Support Team and the DWP's Kickstart programme 11 apprenticeships were offered together with 4 traineeships. Participants in both pathways were also equipped with generic employability skills as part of the programme and their CSCS cards. In addition, Willmott Dixon donated 'prepare for work' and hygiene packs to the participants in the scheme but also to those who took part in construction taster sessions.</p> <p>See response to Actions 1 and 2.</p>

Action 5	Through investing in our educational and housing stock, and providing apprenticeships, training opportunities and work placements within our organisation, we will increase the number of local citizens who are skilled and qualified workers and contributing to Community Benefits.
Progress	<p>Early Years recruited 3 trainees in 2023 who were supported to undertake the Children's Care Learning Play and Development level 2. Two of the trainees have achieved the level 2 qualification and have subsequently applied and successfully secured roles in the early years team in autumn 2024. The trainee positions worked well to move someone from no qualification in early years into achieving the qualification and starting their career in early years.</p> <p>In the academic year 23/24, Caerphilly ACL has supported 4 classroom volunteers as well as supporting the Caerphilly Academy Work Placement Programme whereby we supported an admin placement for 12 weeks – within this time we offered experience and training.</p> <p>Bedwas and St Martin's Comprehensives established STEM workshops undertaken together with support from Willmott Dixon and their supply chain to the Council's annual foodbank appeal and the Free School Meals deliveries.</p> <p>Asset Maintenance and Repairs (HRO and PAMS) recruited 7 new Apprentices (varying trades) this year and we have 25 Apprentices built into our structure, so as Apprentices qualify, we will be looking to replace these on a year on year basis.</p> <p>Full time employment opportunities including apprenticeships, graduate and for long term unemployed will be offered on all Caerphilly Homes new build developments. It will be mandated as part of the chosen contract arrangements that the delivery of targeted recruitment and training outcomes are as equally important to residents and our communities as the new homes we build.</p> <p>Caerphilly Homes is working closely with a range of partners to develop a project for Armed Forces veterans. The project will enable them to develop skills in the construction industry, with the aim of securing long-term and meaningful employment, provides them with a home to address their housing requirements, and wrap around support to ensure</p>

	successful completion of a 12-month training programme and transition into permanent, settled accommodation. The project is currently seeking veterans to enrol on the programme. A similar project will be developed for young people in housing need. Both are supported via Caerphilly Homes and Willmott Dixon, working in partnership to deliver social value outcomes that directly benefit residents.
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Action 6	To further develop an inclusive approach to apprenticeships
Progress	<p>In 2022, the Council held a highly successful corporately funded recruitment campaign for Apprentices, appointing 30 across a range of services. Many of the Apprentices have since secured permanent posts within the Council.</p> <p>Housing Services independently run their own recruitment campaigns for Apprentices, with previous campaigns appointing apprentices across a range of trades.</p> <p>Funding had been committed to support corporate apprenticeship recruitment every 2 years, but unfortunately given the significant financial pressures the Authority has not run the campaign this year. Instead, through effective Workforce Planning, services have been encouraged to build development/apprenticeship roles into structures.</p> <p>The Council's Recruitment Team works collaboratively with our Employment Team and managers across the organisation to address their varying and complex recruitment needs under strict financial constraints. Supporting the organisation to embed workforce planning, the team help managers to shape their workforce, exploring different pathways to employment.</p>

Equality Objective 3 - Community Cohesion - Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities

Community cohesion as defined in Welsh Government's Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan (latest document) is described as the ability of all communities to function and grow in harmony together rather than in conflict. It aims to build

communities where people feel confident, that they belong and are comfortable mixing and interacting with others, particularly with different people and people with different protected characteristics.

Caerphilly adopts the principles that a cohesive community is one where:

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued;
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities;
- strong and positive relationships are developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

When we refer to 'communities' we are often describing a geographical neighbourhood, but the term community may also be used to define individuals who share a protected characteristic (for example ethnicity or culture, age group, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, gender) or interests.

Action 1	Raise the profile for discriminatory incidents reporting in schools through further staff training
Progress	<p>An Anti-Racist Action Plan has been developed in line with a small-scale research study with Cardiff Met. Which was commissioned by the Safeguarding Board. A regional group is in place, and one of the areas focuses on further raising the profile in terms of reporting discriminatory incidents.</p> <p>Schools were offered the following training sessions:</p> <p>No Outsiders – everyone welcome – 32 schools attended</p> <p>Gender Variance – 12 schools sent 16 attendees</p> <p>No Boundaries Anti-Racism Training – 24 schools sent 41 attendees</p> <p>Nil Response regarding Discriminatory Incidents in Schools.</p>

Action 2	Evolve the regional integrated approach, to improve the health and well-being of individuals and families subjected to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV)
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<p>Progress</p>	<p>In relation to monitoring community tensions we work closely with both internal and external partners to ensure awareness is raised of any concerns and we co-ordinate an appropriate response. Internally, Private Sector Housing and Caerphilly Cares are important partners to achieve this objective.</p> <p>We are also working closely with our colleagues in private sector where we have applicants living in unsuitable accommodation and where they have a physical housing need that cannot be met in the borough. We are working with our Registered Social Landlords (RSL) partners to ensure that when new developments are coming online these accommodation needs are being considered.</p> <p>In addition, we have recently submitted our Rapid Rehousing Transitional Programme which outlines how the Council will tackle the Welsh Government agenda for making homelessness rare, brief and non-reoccurring and how we plan the transformation of Temporary Accommodation for the Local Authority and reduce dependency on this.</p> <p>Supporting People service has been commissioned and is in place and is accessible to anyone who requires support, and we have also set up pathways with Caerphilly Cares, our Caerphilly Homes rents teams and our RSL partners for early referral and discussion regarding preventative measures for homelessness.</p> <p>The migration from a property-based to a person-based IT system continues to be progressed to ensure that in future, all Caerphilly Homes records are held in one place. This will improve accessibility of person-centred information from all Housing service areas, increasing the likelihood of incidents/trends being identified that could indicate the possibility of Domestic Abuse.</p> <p>Awareness of incidences of Domestic Violence affecting our tenants has been reduced since the discontinuation of the Domestic Abuse Conference Call several years ago. Should they be made or become aware of domestic violence involving a tenant officers, in addition to considering their Duty to Report, are expected to attempt to make or request a welfare call or visit to the victim to offer support and assistance, supported by partners where necessary, and give consideration as to whether the offer of target hardening equipment or other assistance would be appropriate. These staff also work with the</p>
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customer to help them to report to third parties as sometimes victims feel reluctant to report incidents.

There is once fortnightly attendance at MARAC (Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference) where information is shared by Caerphilly Homes at the meeting and then with Caerphilly Homes staff after the meeting. There may also be specific actions that need to be undertaken such as perpetrators who are required to be added to Employment Protection Register, opening of cases with the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Team in relation to removal of perpetrators, information provided to Landlord Services in regard to fireguard referrals, target hardening, visits in order to encourage engagement with IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocates) etc. In addition to this, letters of support for house moves can come in via the panel and these are then shared with Housing Solutions along with the minutes. This is so assessing officers are aware of circumstances and this then minimises the need for victims to relay all the information again. Information is also shared with Housing Solutions Team where there is any connection to Homelessness or to those living in temporary accommodation.

All staff have received safeguarding training appropriate to their role and are aware of the Duty to Report. We also offer target hardening if there is no ongoing relationship between the parties, and support transfers. The introduction of the Renting Homes Wales Act will enable us to further assist victims due to the ability to approve the removal of contract holders from a joint tenancy, without bringing the whole contract (tenancy) to an end.

Details of the alleged perpetrator and alleged victim are recorded on data entries involving domestic abuse by the relevant case worker to avoid assumptions being made. After MARAC, the ASB team ensures that CX (Housing IT system) is updated.

Housing Advice are currently looking as part of the Rapid Rehousing Transitional Programme at reconfiguring one of our current refuge provisions to a wet house and then identifying with Llamau alternate sites for dispersed refuge provision within the borough. One site has been identified to initially support the transition and this will remain an ongoing development based on data analysis for need.

	<p>Further discussions are being held with Lamau to recruit a Domestic Abuse support worker to be based within the Housing Solution team to support and provide advice to those who present as a part of a holistic assessment and to prevent homelessness where possible.</p> <p>The use of local lettings policies is relevant both for new developments within existing communities, and those existing communities where we are aware of concerns as to community cohesion. The Operation Bang for bonfire night and our work within the community following the murders at Long Row would be examples of partnership working, together with the use of management discretion to facilitate emergency moves for tenants.</p> <p>The Council is collaborating closely with colleagues across the region through Gwent VAWDASV to develop improved training solutions to upskill the workforce and raise awareness.</p> <p>Training for Group 1 VAWDASV is a mandatory module in our suite of Essential Learning which forms part of our induction process. Recruiting managers are required to ensure all new staff complete the learning.</p> <p>We have experienced considerable difficulties over the last year in accessing learning through the provider site and this has impacted on levels of compliance. We are however, shortly about to launch our new Learning Management System (LMS), which will considerably enhance our training provision and in turn result in an upturn in Group 1 completions and renewals.</p> <p>Considerable work has gone into improving the scope of delivery of Ask and Act Group 2 training. Having recruited a new Workforce Development Officer with the experience to deliver Ask and Act training, we have worked with the Gwent Regional Group to deliver a number of courses over a 5 month period, targeting key workforce groups within the Council.</p> <p>In relation to monitoring community tensions, we work closely with both internal and external partners to ensure awareness is raised of any concerns and we co-ordinate an appropriate response. Internally,</p>
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	Private Sector Housing and Caerphilly Cares are important partners to achieve this objective.
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Action 3	Advocate community diversity work with services and partners to celebrate equality of difference by championing commemorative and celebratory dates (i.e. Refugee Awareness Week, Holocaust Memorial Day, and Hate Crime Awareness Week)
Progress	<p>See Section on Equalities Promotion Work and News Stories.</p> <p>The corporate Equalities Training module developed by the West Gwent Cohesion Team has now been adopted by the Workforce Development Team in Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent – which will provide an ongoing asset to all Councils within the region in their delivery of awareness raising of Equalities. These e-learning module support awareness raising of the statutory Duty of Public Sector organisations under the Equality Act, the module also explores themes such as unconscious bias and community cohesion.</p> <p>Social media continues to be instrumental in the sharing of information and the championing of commemorative dates, none more so in the marking of Black History Month and Hate Crime Awareness Week. The Cohesion Team have developed campaigns, projects and engaged with the whole school estate in the planning and delivery of school activities and have supported local authorities and community groups in the coordination of events.</p> <p>Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD)</p> <p>January 2024, we interviewed a survivor of the holocaust and his daughter, which featured on an episode of our Valleys Voices Podcast in the series and supported regional school panel shows to mark this year's Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD). The Cohesion Team also developed a suite of school activities and materials relating to HMD which were disseminated across all schools in the lead up to the day. We also illuminated public building and showcased school activities in the following weeks via local social media channels.</p> <p>The Cohesion Team have also recorded a new mini-series of the 'Valleys Voices' Podcast – the latest a two - part series focuses on the experiences of a Ukrainian refugee (locally resettled) exploring the</p>

personal impact of war, the challenges and experiences in arriving into the UK and how local communities and services have supported.

Black History Month

Schools approach;

Poetry competition and resources were distributed to Schools w/c 25th September. Resources included lesson plans, posters and assembly presentation were also circulated, including;

- List of TV and book resources linked to Black history
- Information about the Windrush exhibition and how Schools can attend (currently in Pontypool)

Corporate/Community approach:

- Staff Bulletin which included 'did you know campaign' (including information on the key days. Social achievement of Black communities members, historical milestones etc.)
- The link to the pre-recorded Cohesion Team's 'Valley Voices' podcast of Sean Wharton, a prominent campaigner for Black Minority Ethnic Communities was also included.
- further links to events taking place across South Wales with Black History Wales such as their launch and premier at the Senedd.
- Online quiz for staff – celebrating the achievements of the Black communities
- Social Media content saluting our sisters. A post circulated across all social media platforms
- Support provided to the coordination of the unveiling of Roy Francis statue. Which took place on 21st October. Regional ITV news coverage was in attendance, the Cohesion Team supported the press release.
- Toured the Windrush exhibit – showcasing the vivid experiences of local residents from the 1st and 2nd generation of Windrush elders. The exhibition was loaned to Caerphilly Library for 3 weeks and promoted via local social media channels.

Hate Crime Awareness Week

The Community Cohesion Team have developed a series of activities for local schools which mark the importance of inclusivity. In Oct 2023, canvases were distributed across a number of schools, each school were encouraged to decorate the canvas with a theme of cohesion/

	<p>inclusivity and submit into a regional competition with a cash prize for each winner – awarded to Primary Schools and Secondary schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social media packs circulated throughout the week – working with Victims Support to provide consistency in the messaging. - Hate Crime Road shows have been held in Cwmbran, Ebbw Vale and Caerphilly (Town) throughout the week (Cohesion Teams held a presence during each event) - The Cohesion Team have also conducted a series of Anti-discrimination sessions for Comprehensive Schools throughout the week.
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Action 4	Engagement – develop a minority communities citizens panel as a means to improving the engagement with lesser-heard voices.
Progress	<p>We have continued to engage with seldom-heard groups through existing networks where good relationships have already been established. We have established good relationships with several groups e.g. Caerphilly People First, Caerphilly Parent Network, Menter Iaith Caerffili etc. and will continue to expand these network contacts across a wider range of groups to ensure all those protected characteristics groups are engaged more effectively.</p>

Action 5	Community Cohesion team will work with LEA (Local Education Authority) and partners to develop improved equities practices and anti-discrimination work in schools. (This will include training to staff, raising the profile of discriminatory incident recording, support for schools to develop the inclusion of equalities work in the curriculum through schools workshops and a schools swap project linking a local school to one in a different and contrasting area)
Progress	<p>Early Years has supported childcare setting staff to attend DARPL training to improve their understanding of diversity and anti-discriminatory practice in policies and delivery in childcare settings. Early Years managers have all attended the DARPL training for managers.</p> <p>As above, the LA will work with relevant partners including Community Cohesion and DARPL.</p> <p>EU nationals are identified on Common Housing Register.</p> <p>The corporate Equalities Training module, previously developed by the West Gwent Cohesion Team, has now also been adopted by the Work</p>

Force Development Team in Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent and will soon be published on Thingi (the local authorities e-learning platform) – providing an ongoing asset to all Councils within the region in their delivery of awareness raising, this modules supports i)increasing the leaners knowledge of the statutory responsibility of the Public Sector (Equalities Act, 2010).

The Cohesion Team have also developed a Hate Crime Training module and a resettlement e-learning module which will also be available to all internal staff via Thingi.

Throughout the year, the Cohesion Team have continued to deliver their Anti-Discrimination programme, provided to school pupils across the West Gwent region. This programme, which consists of a 2-hour workshop provided to primary and secondary pupils (adapted to accommodate the age of the audience), explores topics such as;

- prejudices and bias (how we can be influenced by others/media etc. and how prejudices may impact our behaviours towards others)
- discussions centred on racism and other forms of discrimination (for secondary school pupils this also includes misogyny)
- critical thinking skills

Throughout Caerphilly, during September 2023 to March 2024 the Cohesion Team has delivered workshops to **341 pupils**.

September 2023

Trinant Primary School Year 5 and 6 – 46 pupils

Idris Davies Primary School Year 5 and 6 – 25 pupils

October 2023

Upper Rhymney Primary School Year 6 – 30 pupils

Lewis Boys Comprehensive School Year 9 – 30 pupils

November 2023

Cwm Ifor Primary School Year 6 – 30 pupils

	<p>January 2024</p> <p>Waunfawr Primary School Year 6 – 30 pupils</p> <p>YGG Gilfach Fargoed Year 6 – 30 pupils</p> <p>St Gwladys Year 5 and 6 – 120 pupils</p> <p>80% of pupils expressed a marked improvement of awareness of the topic (including what we mean when discussing the term ‘racism’, how our attitudes of others have the potential in influence our behaviours, how we recognise this, what to do if you experience or witness discrimination within the community and/or school).</p> <p>We are continuing to work with Healthy Schools Officers and Channel/Prevent leads on the future delivery of the programme – with the Cohesion Team securing places on Head Teacher’s forums across the region to promote this opportunity.</p>
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Action 6	Engage with EU nationals with regards to the EU Settlement Scheme
Progress	<p>The EUSS is now closed</p> <p>The Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator (RCCC) has provided briefing for key officers in the lead up to the launch of the Settled Status scheme. Migration mapping, reflecting inward migration into each authority, has also supported LA’s in their Brexit resilience building.</p> <p>We continued to prioritise awareness raising of the EUSS and worked collaboratively with partners such as CAB, EYST and LEAs, alongside Police and Registered Social Landlords. Utilising local networks, resident newsletters and social media to increase awareness.</p> <p>Supported via the Cohesion budget, we also printed EUSS literature available in multiple EU languages which have been distributed across the region to all departments, schools and community buildings.</p> <p>We worked with libraries and partners to host drop-in sessions to promote the scheme. And utilised the EUSS funding made available by WG to purchase additional hard copy resources. Additionally, the Cohesion team commissioned an EUSS Radio Advert on Capital Radio</p>

	<p>that was broadcast for 6 months in the lead up to the EUSS deadline. We also established the 'We are digital' services in all boroughs of West Gwent, meaning local libraries were able to assist those making an application.</p> <p>Overview of progress;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facebook campaign via Facebook Marketing - Regional radio campaign (i.e. Capital radio) - South Wales Argus (advert Paper and Website) - Resident newsletter - Regional drop in sessions <p>Whilst large scale migration is not experienced in the West Gwent Region the possible impact of EU nationals leaving the area had been explored within local resilience forums. As part of this discussion the RCCC mapped all economic migration across West Gwent LA's – highlighting the communities where EU migrants have settled. This has supported readying the local economy to promote the settled status scheme in areas which have experienced higher levels of inward migration.</p> <p>The Private Sector Housing Team has been involved in sourcing and assessing suitability of accommodation for the Afghan, Syrian and Ukrainian resettlement schemes.</p>
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Action 7	Monitor community tensions – link with Partners and take proactive steps to mitigate tensions from escalating in the community
Progress	<p>Housing have taken the lead with Homes for Ukraine scheme and provided additional accommodation via the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme Project Board (TACP).</p> <p>There is once fortnightly attendance at partnership tasking whereby an issue within communities is raised. The ASB team also attended Strike 3 and 4 anti-social behaviour meetings and Organised Crime Group meeting. All of which focus on issues which can affect the community. Recently Caerphilly Homes were involved with the Respect4Rhymney initiative as part of Clear Hold Build which is a 3-phase project focusing on regeneration of areas affected by crime and disorder. There is a particular focus on removing organised crime groups and reduction in crime and ASB through enforcement actions. Work is also undertaken</p>

	<p>with the community so that areas become less susceptible to organised crime groups and criminality.</p> <p>There is also representation on Channel Panel: a multi-agency safeguarding process which aims to support individuals at risk of being drawn into extremism or terrorism. Part of the Government's Prevent agenda for counter Terrorism.</p> <p>Robust practices remain in place and are ongoing; Tension monitoring reports collated weekly and shared with Community Safety/Prevent leads and the regional CONTEST board. Weekly meetings remain in place with the East Gwent Cohesion Team and Gwent Police's Community Cohesion Team. Routine engagement at Community Safety Partnerships across all 3 LA areas. The West Gwent Cohesion Team also provide a weekly update at all partnership tasking meetings held across the region.</p>
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Action 8	To continue support for the LA's engagement with the UK Resettlement Scheme
Progress	<p>Early Years team will continue to support families with 0-3s under the Asylum Dispersal and UK Resettlement Scheme through Flying Start Outreach programme ensuring support to the most vulnerable families.</p> <p>The resettlement team along with Displaced People in Action (commissioned third party organisation), continue to support families who have arrived via the UKRS scheme up to the end of the 5th year. We taper support off during their resettlement period, but if the families require any assistance after the 5-year point, we still provide this or signpost to the correct organisation to assist.</p> <p>We are still committed to continue to support this scheme and hope to be able to offer up future properties and welcome further families over the next 2 years.</p> <p>We continue to have regular update meetings and open dialogue with the Home Office, Wales strategic partnership, Welsh Government.</p> <p>See Case Study 3.</p>

Equality Objective 4 - Inclusive Engagement and Participation - Engage with citizens to encourage participation, to have their voices heard when planning service delivery

The availability of information in various formats is essential to ensure that all citizens are able to participate in any engagement exercise. Whilst advances in technology enable us to provide information in digital formats, there continue to be barriers to engagement. Transport, mental health, socio-economic status, low literacy and numeracy skills and particular difficulties experienced by seldom heard groups, are amongst the barriers that continue to prevent citizens from engaging with the council and wider support services.

This Objective reflects one of the council's Corporate Objectives to 'Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being'. It includes supporting people to help themselves by providing comprehensive advice and guidance including signposting to other services. It is about having meaningful conversations with people to help them identify what matters to them, which will inform services to suit their needs.

Action 1	Support citizens to 'help themselves' by providing comprehensive advice and information, including signposting to other services
Progress	<p>The Early Years Hub acts as a centralised information contact point for families with young children ensuring they are able to access the support and information that they need. A video explaining the Early Years Hub and our support services is on our website About us - Caerphilly Early Years.</p> <p>Caerphilly Cares enables and empowers individuals and communities to take control of their own future based on "what matters" to them. The team aim to build resilience and reduce the need for repeated service intervention by working with both internal (CCBC) and external partners, linking residents to the right service to meet their needs.</p> <p>Caerphilly Cares team comprises of several elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The gateway (central point of contact)

- Volunteering
- Community Development
- Community Connectors
- Cost of Living
- Food Poverty and instability
- Community Hub development

The Volunteer Befriending Service, as part of Caerphilly Cares, provides support to vulnerable adults throughout the borough, improving their lives through social interaction. The service aims to reduce isolation & feelings of loneliness and encourage people to participate in activities of their choice. Volunteers are matched to offer support in one of three ways; on a one to one basis at home or in the community, in residential or day care settings and at volunteer led social clubs.

The service supports older people and people with learning & physical disabilities but also recruits volunteers from within these protected characteristics. Some examples include:

- Our oldest volunteer at 90 years old is matched with a 93 year old gentleman, they have fantastic conversations and have developed a real friendship as a result of the service.
- The team have worked to reduce potential barriers to volunteering for non UK nationals now living in the borough, by upskilling the staff and improving our onboarding processes. We have successfully recruited volunteers now living in the borough from Africa and Asia, one of whom has since found employment in the care sector.
- We have recruited volunteers with Autism, successfully matching them to roles that suit their needs and minimise barriers to participation.

All volunteers can access training in line with the Council Workforce Development offer (Dementia awareness, Autism awareness etc.) allowing them to tailor their learning and development to meet the needs of the person or group they are matched with.

A practical example in the Community Hub pilot in Rhymney Library to support the promotion of the Welsh Language:

A little girl often visits the Rhymney Library Hub during school holidays or after school to exchange her books, or to play on the PCs, always full

	<p>of questions about what the staff do in the Library Hub, or what staff's interests are. A member of the Hub team from Caerphilly Cares, realising that the girl went to a local Welsh school (due to her uniform) started speaking Welsh to her. The girl was so surprised and thrilled, the pair conversed together for a while. Speaking about what the child was currently studying in school also led to the girl asking about the relevant themed Welsh books, which were loaned out to the girl that day. The child has been back to the Hub several times since and has brought her father in to meet the staff. This small gesture not only encouraged the speaking and practice of the Welsh language but also offered a moment of unique connection between people.</p> <p>For more insight into our work, please view Case Studies 5 and 6.</p> <p>Advice provided on website and Common Housing Register. In addition, Estate Management Officers, Rent Officers and Tenancy Enforcement Officers (now Caerphilly Homes ASB Team) make appropriate referrals and signpost customers. Whenever we cannot help a customer, they are always given advice as to who can help them, and this is logged on CX (Housing IT system). Where needed we will also directly connect customers to other departments and make approaches on their behalf.</p> <p>We are working currently to better understand the needs of customers and potential customers in order to improve our existing services. We are looking in detail at the 'customer experience' linked to the 'Mobilising Team Caerphilly' work that is underway across the Council. This will involve talking to our customers and staff about what matters to them in order to inform an action plan that will see our services change over the next 12 months to better meet customer needs. We have been running Housing surgeries in communities since April making advice more accessible.</p> <p>Whenever we close an Anti-Social Behaviour case our customers are contacted by letter in order to complete an evaluation. They are offered options such as online response, by post or by phone call. Should we not get a response to the letter then they are called to ensure they have had an opportunity to voice their opinion. Should we receive negative feedback then that is investigated, and the customer is contacted if it is deemed necessary.</p>
Action 2	Have 'meaningful conversations' to help citizens identify what matters to them to inform outcome focussed planning.

<p>Progress</p>	<p>Our approach to consultation and engagement aims to ensure that all those who wish to have a say are able to do so in a meaningful way. The council's Caerphilly Conversation platform provides a mechanism for informing and coordinating engagement activities, collecting views through a variety of tools (including maps and surveys), feeding back on the outcomes of those engagements and how they have informed the decision making process https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/</p> <p>Other ways of getting involved in consultation and engagement around change proposals are detailed on the platform and promoted in other ways, as appropriate to stakeholders, this may include face to face drop in sessions (both in person and online), attendance at meetings etc and documents available in Welsh and other languages and formats.</p> <p>Early Years has moved to a What Matters approach model using the hierarchy of support and ensuring the most vulnerable families are supported. All contacts with the early years team start with a What Matters conversation with the family to understand their strengths and their needs to ensure they are given the right advice and support to achieve their family outcomes. The Early Intervention team delivers bespoke packages of support to families based on the What Matters conversation. Where there are more complex family situations or multiple professionals involved, What Matters Meetings help to identify the family priorities to ensure the family is not overwhelmed and remains in control of their plan.</p> <p>Housing held a rent consultation on Affordability, Value for money and cost of living crisis. Over 300 responses received via completed surveys, online and face to face sessions with tenants. Leave as it is 330 responses this year, with New WHQS 2023 requirements include tenant engagement on the programme. TPAS Cymru providing support for a tenant engagement strategy for WHQS.</p> <p>A Tenant Information Exchange is held every 6 to 8 weeks (online/face to face) which is an opportunity to find out what is happening in Housing and share their views. Guest speakers have covered topics such as tenancy enforcement, new build programme, tenant participation strategy.</p>
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	<p>Regular email to involved members providing details of opportunities for them to participate both with Caerphilly Homes and TPAS Cymru.</p> <p>Regular updates and good news stories posted on social media and using Egov. e.g. you said, we did in relation to Rent consultation.</p> <p>Caerphilly Homes undertook a comprehensive tenant satisfaction survey in autumn 2023. Results are benchmarked against other social housing landlords in Wales.</p> <p>Consultation undertaken with all contract holders (tenants) on proposals to modernise the provision of the Landlord Service to improve customer access to officers within the community.</p>
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Action 3	Identify and support carers
Progress	<p>We continue to see growth in awareness and understanding of carers rights, increased carer involvement and assessments namely through the number of carers in receipt of regular information, advice and updates from the team via newsletter or dedicated social media groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased number of carers on mailing list from 1727 to 2162 - Increased number of carers accessing social media groups from 860 to 1389 - Carried out 210 carers' assessments - We have provided formal information and advice 337 times at carers request instead of an assessment - We have facilitated the 113 carer specific events (either for adult carers, young carers or both) - We have annual events to promote carers right day and a series of events across the borough every year for carers week with an attendance figure of 1700 for 2023-2024. <p>We continue to develop and grow local carers support groups and have developed initiatives with Gwent partners that enable Carers to have more autonomy, choice and flexibility in how they access short breaks from their caring responsibilities.</p>

Action 4	Embed the Consultation and Engagement Framework into all consultation exercises undertaken by council services to ensure key stakeholders are consulted with and given time to respond
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Progress	<p>Our internal consultation and engagement working group has become a key mechanism to disseminate information, share good practice and embed the principles of the Consultation and Engagement Framework with staff across the organisation and in turn, further improves engagement practices.</p> <p>Typically, service areas such as Housing consult with our Consultation and Public Engagement Officer.</p>
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Action 5	Identify service needs of specific user groups; what barriers prevent access, and what actions are required to remove those barriers
Progress	<p>Consultation and engagement activities are designed in line with the council's integrated impact assessment (IIA) process. Wherever appropriate, the line of questioning within any engagement activity will focus on seeking views of stakeholders on negative impact, barriers to access and mitigation that would help reduce that impact. The IIA is updated to incorporate these views following consultation.</p> <p>Our Cost-of-living Hardship Grant was established in 2023 in response to identified need across the council frontline support services, for those who need urgent financial support but who are not eligible or have exhausted existing grant schemes, in particular those that might be working but are experiencing in-work poverty. The fund provides either direct financial assistance (up to £700) or equivalent white goods (if that is the specific need). Referrals to the grant are made by a range of partners including Citizens' Advice, Holistic Hoarding, Housing staff, Resettlement Team, POBL. In 2023/24 grants totalling £376,538 were awarded.</p> <p>Barriers to participating online - Tablet loan scheme developed working with Digital Wales and have provided support to assist tenants to join us at online sessions using their own equipment. Also set up dial out so could telephone those who were unable to join us online.</p> <p>A lack of transport and other issues (such as caring responsibilities) may prevent someone from taking part in our activities. Tenants are either provided with mileage costs or taxis.</p> <p>Suitable venues – we offer accessible venues.</p>

	<p>Language - we have used various translation services such as BSL, Punjabi, live captioner at our events, to make them more inclusive.</p> <p>Time is also a factor – we are now able to offer online activities for those who prefer to engage this way and offer sessions at different times for those tenants who are working or need to meet during school time.</p> <p>We have spoken to tenants about how they like to be involved so that we can identify their needs and remove any barriers that are in place where possible.</p> <p>Currently working on the Customer portal which will provide tenants the opportunity to for example log a repair online etc. This would remove the barrier for tenants with hearing loss as an example to access services in a way that is suitable for them.</p> <p>A Cost of Living (COL) Workstream has been created between Caerphilly Homes, Caerphilly Cares and its partners to discuss the COL issues facing our customers, identify any gaps in services and work as a partnership to identify appropriate solutions.</p> <p>Caerphilly Homes has developed an addendum to the Local Housing Strategy Delivery Plan which responds directly to Welsh Government's Anti-Racism Wales Action Plan. Once approved the actions contained within the addendum with help to identify and address barriers that Black and Minority Ethnic people may face when accessing housing services.</p>
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Action 6	Review and update our key stakeholder groups within the county borough that represent protected characteristic groups
Progress	<p>This is ongoing and at the outset of every consultation/engagement a full stakeholder analysis is completed and tailored to ensure all those interested in having their say are able to do so.</p> <p>Contact made using social media and Tenant & Resident Association groups to try and recruit more volunteers from the protected</p>

	<p>characteristic groups. However, we don't currently monitor these characteristics within our engaged tenant list.</p> <p>We are aware of some of the characteristics e.g. age and disability but don't monitor as part of our day-to-day activity or store data. We ensure that where we are aware we offer opportunities to participate e.g. attend specific networks e.g. TPAS Cymru Disability network.</p> <p>Caerphilly Homes is a member of Tai Pawb, an organisation which promotes equality and social justice in housing.</p> <p>Currently developing an Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (ARWAP) specifically for Housing Department to ensure we maintain and enhance our anti-racist approach. We are also currently reviewing issues around the LGBTQ+ community.</p>
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Action 7	Review and strengthen internal processes for undertaking Integrated Impact Assessments and related consultation
Progress	<p>The Council has a new Integrated Impact Assessment which was implemented in April 2021 to coincide with the implementation of the Socio-economic Duty.</p> <p>Recent Welsh Language Tribunal cases have been opportunities for further learning and strengthening of the impact assessment process, in particular around the Welsh language.</p> <p>Relevant information has been shared with Management Network and key officers, as well as being made available on the new Digital Workspace (Intranet) for officers and elected members.</p>

Action 8	Ensure that activities related to service change and transformation embed the principles of good consultation with communities as part of 'The Caerphilly Conversation'
Progress	<p>The Engagement Team support each strand of the Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation programme and advise on/lead on delivery of consultation and engagement in relation to these areas of work to ensure that the principles of good community engagement and consultation are considered throughout the process.</p>

	Housing follows all corporate guidance, and where necessary, seeks advice from the Consultation and Public Engagement Officer.
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Equality Objective 5 - Welsh Language - To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements

The Equality Act 2010 does not cover Welsh language issues, but we have a set of standards under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. These are detailed in the regulations approved by Welsh Government as the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015.

Internal working practices continue to evolve to ensure that the principle of language equality is respected in every aspect of service provision. To assist the council in meeting the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards and to meet the needs of the Welsh speaking population of the county borough, we work in partnership with organisations such as; Menter Iaith Caerffili, Fforwm Iaith, Welsh medium schools etc. This work is detailed in the county borough's Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027.

Cabinet approved the new Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027 for the county borough on 9 March 2022.

We must comply with all agreed Welsh Language Standards as detailed in the Council's Compliance Notice to ensure that the Welsh-speaking population, whether they be staff, citizens, students or visitors can access the council's services in Welsh.

Our progress is recorded each year in the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report, which is published below for 2022-2023. The council's Cabinet approved publication of the report on 14 June 2023. To view the 2022-2023 report [click here](#).

Action 1	Raise awareness amongst staff that come into contact with children and young people of the need to foster positive attitudes towards the Welsh language
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Progress	<p>Early Years encourages staff to learn Welsh, use Welsh in their everyday lives and promote the benefits of bilingualism. Early Years is working towards the targets of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan of 26% of year 1 learners in Welsh medium Education by 2032.</p> <p>Welsh Language Partnership work between the Youth Service, Urdd, Menter Iaith and SYDIC continued throughout 23/24 to ensure the Service is developing its accessibility for young people to access youth work in Welsh and engage in Welsh culture and heritage learning through an enhanced and bilingual curriculum.</p> <p>A new Welsh Language Youth Club opened in the Service's new centre at Virginia Park. Initial engagement levels are very good, as the club develops, the service will support the provision with enhanced curriculum delivery and opportunities for accredited learning through the medium of Welsh, and youth voice and participative processes, linked to the Youth Forum.</p> <p>The Welsh Language Forum has been meeting to deliver on the actions in the Five-Year Welsh Language Strategy. The group has focussed its attention on actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve communication between the council and partner organisations of the work and activities share taking place locally and share widely. - Regional partnership with the Council's and Welsh in Education Forums working together to plan Welsh medium activities and promote Welsh medium education - Link in with Language Champions and Ambassadors across partner organisations to ensure a consistent message regarding Welsh medium education across the board and to promote Welsh medium activities. - Promote Welsh medium education and Welsh language activities with people from protected groups, such as ethnic minority communities and disability. Promote Welsh courses for refugees. <p>A dedicated member of library staff has significantly enriched school visits by incorporating Welsh language elements into their storytelling sessions. By providing stories, songs, and communication in Welsh,</p>
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	this staff member has not only fostered a love for reading and language among young learners but also promoted cultural identity and inclusivity.
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Action 2	Develop bilingual leadership skills amongst young people to help them become community champions of the language within their communities
Progress	Over the year, a number of presentations were made to Year 10 and 11 pupils across a number of schools explaining how the language is used as a part of daily work. All these sessions consisted of promoting career and apprenticeship opportunities within the Council, often providing the students with the opportunity to ask questions or use their devices to search the Council's website for current job and apprenticeship opportunities.

Action 3	Promote the availability of bilingual services by ensuring Welsh speakers and learners within service areas wear an appropriate lanyards /badges
Progress	<p>All learners and Welsh speakers have received a 'laith Gwaith' lanyard or badge, and we continue to promote their use, especially in public-facing roles.</p> <p>A dedicated member of our library staff, passionate about the Welsh language, has been making a significant impact by adding value to a local craft club's visits to the library. The group consists of women over 50, many of whom are taking Welsh language courses as part of their personal growth and lifelong learning journey. Recognising the importance of this cultural and educational effort, the staff member has found ways to support and enhance their experience.</p> <p>During the craft club's regular visits, the staff member has been engaging the group in informal Welsh conversations, helping them practice and build confidence in the language. The staff has been recommending and obtaining Welsh language fiction at the appropriate level. They have also taken the initiative to organise a designated space in the library where the group could come together to practice their Welsh before their college exams. This provided a quiet and supportive environment for them to focus on their studies. They also utilised this time and space to complete the course work they had been unable to finish during term time.</p>

	<p>Promoting Cultural Identity: This initiative supports the Welsh Government's commitment to promoting the Welsh language and cultural heritage. By giving this group the opportunity to practice and strengthen their language skills, the library is playing a key role in fostering linguistic diversity.</p> <p>Supporting Older Learners: The group consists of women over 50, a demographic often underrepresented in formal education. This project supports equal opportunities in learning, showing that age is no barrier to education and cultural engagement.</p> <p>Creating Safe, Inclusive Spaces: By offering space and support for Welsh language learning, the library demonstrates its commitment to inclusion, providing equal access to resources and opportunities for all members of the community, especially women from older age groups.</p>
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Action 4	Support the development and promotion of a directory of Welsh medium services available locally
Progress	<p>This is embedded as an action in the Five-Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027 and is an area of work that will be looked at.</p> <p>Currently we promote the links with other Welsh medium partners via our website and in working regionally on the Regional Welsh medium Education Champion pilot project https://cymraegibawb.cymru/home.</p> <p>Members of the public are also signposted to the dewis.wales website</p>

Action 5	Ensure that Welsh medium events and activities are a part of the Council's community events programme
Progress	<p>Welsh language is a part of all Council events with bilingual signage and promotional material being created and on display.</p> <p>We are working with the Events Team to ensure that all public address messages are bilingual, Welsh first for all events.</p>

	<p>In June 2023, Caerphilly Council hosted the first council-led pride event in Wales, in Caerphilly town centre called Pride Caerffili.</p> <p>The event was led by the Equalities and Welsh Language Team, together with a number of council service areas, Councillors and other stakeholders. There was a great emphasis on the event being bilingual, from the branding, the bilingual working group agendas, and even having a Welsh speaking compere on the main stage during the event.</p>
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Action 6	Promote Welsh language as a recognised objective for managers, to enable them to map Welsh language provision across their service area and increase capacity where necessary
Progress	Early Years encourages staff to learn Welsh, use Welsh in their everyday lives and promote the benefits of bilingualism. Early Years is working towards the targets of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan of 26% of year 1 learners in Welsh medium Education by 2032.

Action 7	Consider the impact on the Welsh language when planning housing developments, in particular Welsh medium school places, street names etc.
Progress	<p>The Planning Department's upgraded Public Access platform enables people to search, track and comment on planning applications in English and in Welsh.</p> <p>With regard to Street Naming, in the 2023-2024 financial year we have issued 1 new street name in Welsh (Clos Cae Isaf) and 1 new street name in English (Pleasant Rise).</p> <p>The most recent agreed policy is that we name new streets on a 50/50 Welsh/English basis.</p> <p>We do promote a Welsh Government website for The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales when considering property, street and place names – https://historicplacenames.rcahmw.gov.uk. Any suggestions for new street names may reflect geography / topography of the local area or local history / culture. The Council has a statutory responsibility for street naming and numbering but not the statutory power to insist on particular street names.</p>

	The naming of development sites for promotional purposes is outside the remit of Street Naming & Numbering.
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Action 8	Ensure the council's website is bilingual and pages are monitored and updated in both languages on a rolling programme basis
Progress	<p>Audit of entire website and its functionality was completed in September 2019. Measures were put in place as part of this investigation to ensure that no information was uploaded to the website unless it was bilingual, with staff being informed of the new process for publishing bilingual information on the Council's website.</p> <p>Any issues on any webpages are actioned with urgency.</p> <p>A new website is at the final stage of the tendering process. The new website will be accessible and will consider the requirements of relevant Welsh Language Standards.</p>

Action 9	Ensure the council's Intranet has a Welsh interface and menus in line with Standard 126
Progress	<p>A bilingual intranet is now current practice. Following the launch of our new Digital Workspace (intranet) for staff, we are in the process of fine-tuning the pages to ensure that every page is fully accessible in both Welsh and English.</p> <p>There is a dedicated section on the intranet for Welsh language information for staff to access, regarding the Welsh Language Standards, Welsh language training and information on Welsh translation.</p> <p>There are a number of HR forms and policies available for staff in Welsh on the HR Portal on the Digital Workspace.</p>

Action 10	Create a campaign to attract young Welsh speaking citizens into youth work, sport and art activities as leaders
Progress	This is embedded as an action in the Five-Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027 and is an area of work that is currently being discussed with Welsh Language Forum partners.

Action 11	Work with young people to raise awareness of the Welsh language as a valuable skill for training and employment
Progress	<p>At Caerphilly Council, we pride ourselves on our partnership working with external organisations. For many years now, we've worked closely with Careers Wales to go to into schools and hold workshops and assemblies on Welsh in the workplace.</p> <p>Our school visits during 2023-2024 included St Martin's Comprehensive School, Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni, St Cenydd Comprehensive School, and Islwyn High School.</p> <p>This year, our work was recognised by Careers Wales as we were nominated and shortlisted for the Valued Partner Award. Even though we did not win the award, it was a great achievement to be recognised for the work we've done throughout the years and continue to do in a number of schools in the county borough.</p> <p>Over the year, a number of presentations were made to Year 10 and 11 pupils across a number of schools explaining how the language is used as a part of daily work. All these sessions consisted of promoting career and apprenticeship opportunities within the Council, often providing the students with the opportunity to ask questions or use their devices to search the Council's website for current job and apprenticeship opportunities.</p>
Action 12	Hold an annual Welsh language jobs fair to raise awareness of the value of the language to employment in the Welsh public sector and the ability to contact the council in Welsh by telephone, face to face and by written communication
Progress	<p>This is embedded as an action in the Five-Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027 and is an area of work that is currently being discussed with Welsh Language Forum partners.</p>

Equality Objective 6 - Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce - Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough

Creating a workplace, which is safe and inclusive, promotes a positive working environment where staff feel valued and empowered, enabling them to provide high quality services to our citizens.

We need a greater understanding of the diversity of our workforce. To achieve this, collection of equalities monitoring data is crucial. Data must be captured at the beginning of the employment process, cleansed, and updated on a regular basis.

Fairness at work and good job performance go hand in hand. Tackling discrimination helps to attract, motivate and retain staff and enhances an organisation's reputation as an inclusive employer.

Equalities and Welsh language training equips staff with the skills and understanding required to engage with citizens sensitively. Upskilling staff to have an awareness of protected characteristics ensures that citizens with specific needs, receive services that are accessible and compliant.

The Council's HR system has been upgraded so that it can record language skills of staff and be able to pull reports should they be required.

Action 1	Develop online equalities training which will be mandatory for all staff and elected members
Progress	<p>Discussions taking place to develop an Online Learning Platform called Thingi, with a view of hosting a wide range of courses in Welsh and in English, including Equalities and Welsh Language Awareness. Some of these courses will be mandatory for new employees in the organisation.</p> <p>The enhanced provision of equalities training courses for staff and managers is one of the actions identified within the Workforce Development Strategy 2021–2024.</p>

	<p>The Workforce Development Team is working closely with the Equalities and Welsh Language Team and Managers to roll out Equalities Awareness Training for frontline staff. The course has been developed and implementation will commence in November, starting with the Waste Management service.</p> <p>We have developed a new Equalities eLearning module that is part of our new Essential Learning suite and will be a mandatory module for completion as part of the induction process for all new starters.</p> <p>The new LMS will also have a suite of Equalities eLearning training modules that the workforce can access and complete through self-directed learning, or which can be assigned by line managers we need is identified.</p> <p>We are continuing to work with the Equalities and Welsh Language Unit, colleagues across Wales that form part of the Wales Learning Consortium and our recognised Trade Unions (Welsh Union Learning Fund) to explore new training opportunities.</p>
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Action 2	<p>Implement the National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV).</p> <p>% of workforce who have completed Basic Awareness training (Group 1) / No of staff completed Basic Awareness training (Group 1)</p> <p>% of identified staff who have completed Ask and Act training (Group 2)</p> <p>% of identified staff who have completed Enhanced Training (Group 3)</p> <p>Implement Refresher training when available and appropriate</p>
Progress	<p>All Housing staff undertake relevant training.</p> <p><i>*Numbers quoted are as reported in our 23/24 Annual Return.</i></p> <p>5022 staff members have completed Basic Awareness training (Group 1) which is 58.22% as a percentage of the total workforce.</p>

	<p>64 employees completed Group 1 training in the reference period (1st April 23 to 31st March 24)</p> <p>76 employees completed Group 2 "Ask and Act" training in the reference period (1st April 23 to 31st March 24).</p> <p>9 employees completed Group 3 "Ask and Act" Champions training in the reference period (1st April 23 to 31st March 24).</p> <p>41 elected members have completed Enhanced Training (Group 3).</p> <p>Delivery of Group 1 training across this last year has been through the Learning@Wales system. Significant issues have been experienced and this has considerably impacted our ability to effectively deliver the awareness training. Thingi (our new LMS) will provide a much more robust platform for training delivery and we expect to see a considerable increase in our completion numbers in the year ending 31st March.</p> <p>Groups 2 and 3 have been delivered regionally and therefore numbers have historically been low. Having appointed a new Workforce development Officer with the capability to support the delivery of Group 2 and 3 training, we will see a significant increase in completions in the year ending 31st March 2025.</p>
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Action 3	Disability Confident – improve on our current standard
Progress	<p>We have consolidated our Level 2 Registration as a Disability Confident employer and we will work collaboratively with our Trade Union partners to improve ways to improve on our current standard.</p> <p>Working collaboratively with our Trade Union colleagues, we continue to raise awareness of all forms of discrimination and the requirement to effectively challenge prejudice at source.</p>

Action 4	Ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and encourage disclosure: the publishing of pay differences by protected characteristic groups, the annual publication of our employment data, and
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	work linked to improve staff disclosure rates of employment data, either through recruitment or via iTrent Self-Service
Progress	Work is being undertaken at the moment with updates to the Council's HR / Payroll system to enable the Council to report more widely on different equalities workforce data, as required under the statutory duties.

Action 5	Re-establish our membership to support Stonewall's Workplace Diversity Champions Index
Progress	We are not pursuing this action due to financial constraints.

Action 6	Work collaboratively to build the brand 'Proud Councils' to support Pride events
Progress	<p>Proud Councils meet online throughout the year to discuss ongoing projects and opportunities to promote LGBTQ+ events. By working collaboratively, we produce material to post on our social media channels to raise awareness of LGBTQ+ matters and ensure there is a consistent message across the relevant local authority areas.</p> <p>June 2023 was a very busy month with it being Pride Month. Proud Council members showed their support by attending the first ever Pride Caerffili event with an information stand, and came together, as we do every year, to march at Pride Cymru and show support and solidarity for the LGBTQ+ community.</p>

Action 7	Ensure appropriate Welsh language training is available to staff, from basic to advanced levels
Progress	<p>Caerphilly Council has provided conversational Welsh courses for staff and elected members since 2001. Courses are also accessible to members of the public and staff members from partner organisations to attend. The courses range from basic taster courses for beginners to courses which cater for those who are now fluent Welsh speakers.</p> <p>During the initial lockdown, all courses moved to being held online; this in turn has led to the majority of lessons continuing to be held online, with a small number of staff attending lessons in person.</p> <p>We run in-house training sessions including taster courses for staff which range from pronunciation of local place names and job titles, to basic greetings including likes and dislikes.</p>

The data for the Welsh courses offered and attended by Caerphilly CBC staff for the academic year 2023-2024 is as follows showing the number of staff that attended each course:

- Taster Courses – 55
- Entry Level Year Courses – 18
- Foundation Level Year Courses – 9
- Intermediate Level Year Courses – 6
- Advanced Level Year Courses – 2
- Proficiency Courses – 2
- Number that withdrew from courses – 4

Caerphilly Council is proud to support staff in a wide range of Welsh language courses via the Learn Welsh website. Courses include year-long courses, lasting between 30 and 32 weeks; online courses, 10-hour self-study modules; summer and residential schools; and taster and supplementary courses, each ranging from Entry Level to Proficiency level.

The overall number of staff learning Welsh increased during this financial year to 96 from 61 last year. This coincides with us changing the way staff are offered courses and working more closely with the Employability Team to offer a wide range of taster courses to all members of the team. Compared to previous years, we now have a much more streamlined registration process which has helped reduce our administration time.

Working closely with the National Learn Welsh centre, staff can start a Welsh course at any point during the academic year, and as noted, above courses vary in delivery style and location. Some staff have even followed intensive week-long courses at Nant Gwrtheyrn on the Llŷn Peninsula.

To further encourage staff to attend courses, we hold a 'Clwb Clebran' (chat club) for Welsh learners and speakers, to come together and to create a welcoming environment for staff to use their Welsh language

	<p>skills. The network of staff supports each other in the workplace and help develop Welsh language skills for the workplace.</p> <p>During 2023-2024, staff were given 2 opportunities to attend a Welsh Language Awareness course, which attracted 11 attendees across the two sessions. The Welsh Language Awareness courses can be very effective in changing attitudes and explore the following points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why do we need to give attention to the Welsh language? 2. What do we need to know about the language and its speakers? 3. How can we act in a way that facilitates the use of the Welsh language?
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Action 8	Provide opportunities for staff to improve their existing Welsh language skills for business use
Progress	<p>Early Years encourages staff to learn Welsh, use Welsh in their everyday lives and promote the benefits of bilingualism.</p> <p>Housing staff regularly receive emails regarding Welsh language training and staff are supported to attend/learn.</p> <p>All-user emails are sent regularly reminding staff of Welsh language opportunities and courses, locally, regionally and online. We work closely with Coleg Gwent and Menter Caerffili to give staff an idea of the internal and external support that is available to them and opportunities where they can use and improve the Welsh language skills they already have.</p> <p>We also run a club, 'Clwb Clebran' for Welsh speaking staff and new speakers of the language to come together to support each other in the workplace. We invite partner organisations such as the Yr Urdd, Coleg Gwent and Menter Caerffili to promote their activities and services, and to provide information on how more Welsh speakers can get involved.</p> <p>Included in emails advertising courses, we include feedback from members of staff who have already attended and an easy registration system. Staff are given permission to attend courses by their line managers, which in turn provides all parties with a commitment to learning Welsh. We have staff learning Welsh at all levels.</p>

	<p>Throughout the year, we held a series of Welsh awareness and Welsh language taster sessions with the Employability Team. We looked at greetings in Welsh, including how to answer the phone bilingually, days of the week, counting to 10 and how to pronounce local place names and job titles in Welsh. These short, intensive sessions provided staff with knowledge about why Welsh is important including information on the standards, equipping the team with the confidence to answer the phone bilingually.</p> <p>The sessions were provided for all members of the Employability Teams spread throughout 3 sessions, each held for 2.5 hours and was mandatory for all staff to attend one course. In total, 41 members of the team attended these sessions.</p> <p>Staff left the session commenting on how they felt they had taken useful skills from the session, some of which asking how to sign up to full Welsh courses.</p>
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Action 9	Provide opportunities for Welsh speaking staff and learners to use their language skills in the workplace
Progress	<p>Early Years encourages staff to learn Welsh, use Welsh in their everyday lives and promote the benefits of bilingualism. Early Years supports Coffi Cymraeg sessions monthly for teams to use and improve their confidence in using Welsh in the workplace.</p> <p>Welsh speaking staff and those learning Welsh are supported by attending our workplace 'Clwb Clebran' (chat club), to come together and to create a welcoming and supportive environment for staff to use their Welsh language skills. The network of staff supports each other in the workplace and help develop Welsh language skills for the workplace.</p> <p>A Welsh speaking member of staff is available should a customer wish to receive a service in Welsh.</p>

Equality Objective 7 - Reducing the Gender Pay Gap

We are required to look at gender pay differences within the council and identify an objective that will address any identified difference.

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties Wales) Regulations 2011, the Council is required to collect and publish annual employment data across a number of protected characteristics. Information regarding the number of people employed by the council, arranged by, job, pay, contract type and working pattern, should only be broken down in relation to women and men. In addition, the Council must publish data on pay differences and their causes, between employees with and without protected characteristics.

As a Council, we are confident that our gender pay gap does not stem from paying male and female employees differently for the same or equivalent work. The gender pay gap is the result of roles in which male and females currently work and the salaries that these roles attract.

Our gender pay gap is reflective of the causes of gender pay gap at a societal level. For example, research has identified that, although parents are increasingly flexible, the responsibility of childcare still falls disproportionately upon women. It is a fact within this data that females hold the vast majority of part time posts and that these are the posts that attract salaries in the lower quartiles. To view the Council's Gender Pay Gap Statement [click here](#).

Action 1	Review the data relating to the workforce and determine actions required to meet the general duty as laid down in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties (Wales) Regulations 2011
Progress	<p>We will continue to review and provide annual Gender Pay Gap data and will publish our data accordingly.</p> <p>We currently produce a range of Workforce Data to fulfil our statutory duties, but through enhancements to our HR Management Information system and our ability to report data in real time, we are developing more meaningful data aligned to meeting the general duty as laid down in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties (Wales) Regulations 2011.</p>

Action 2	Publish employment information as required by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
Progress	We continue to publish information as required by the Equality Act 2010 and we are committed to refining and developing the scope of our reporting aligned to the ongoing investment and development of our HR Management Information system.

Action 3	Use the My Time appraisal process to develop female staff
Progress	My Time/My Time Extra is embedded across the organisation and is being used by Services across the Council to develop female staff.

Action 4	Raise awareness of job and business opportunities to non-traditional groups (i.e. not stereotyping jobs to gender)
Progress	<p>Notwithstanding the financial difficulties currently being experienced and the vacancy management process introduced to support these challenges, the Council's dedicated Recruitment Team in HR work closely with the managers, the Employment Team and other partners to effectively market and raise awareness of opportunities within the Council.</p> <p>Effective service planning, online recruitment, targeted recruitment, the use of social media, tailored recruitment solutions, hybrid recruitment and effective networking continue to be used to recruit the right individuals with the right skills and capabilities to deliver the Council's goals.</p> <p>Apprenticeship programmes, Career pathways, working with Schools, Colleges and Universities enable the Council to raise awareness of job opportunities and encourage applicants from non-traditional groups.</p> <p>Encouragingly Engineering job adverts regularly attract female applicants.</p>

Action 5	Review and update HR policies regularly to include matters such as flexible working, part-time or job-share options, shared parental leave etc.
Progress	Our Agile Working Policy, Annual Leave Policy, Flexi Scheme and Mileage Scheme have been reviewed and implemented. These support equity and encourage flexibility. A review of the Council's Leave of

	Absence Procedure and underpinning family friendly policies is currently in progress.
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