

**Torfaen County Borough Council
Annual Strategic Equality Monitoring Report
2023 – 2024**



OUR COUNCIL VALUES
“Supportive, Fair, Effective and Innovative”

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Our Equality Statement

“Torfaen County Borough Council is committed to achieving greater equality as an employer and in the performance of all aspects of its business. The Council will ensure that the community we serve, and current and potential members of staff have equality of opportunity to access all our services and opportunities”.

The Council will seek to ensure that no one receives less favourable treatment as a result of possessing a specific protected characteristic. Where it is evident that there is inequality of treatment or outcome the Council will actively take steps to address such inequality.

We will focus upon identifying the inequality issues within Torfaen and how we will work towards achieving better outcomes for people where there is evidence of inequality in our service provision. We believe all Torfaen citizens can expect to be treated fairly and with respect when using or coming into contact with Council services and we will work closely with the public and our partners to resolve issues where such standards are not evident.

Ensuring our services help and support vulnerable people within our communities is an important priority for the Council. We will work towards improving and maintaining our services, so they assist and protect the rights of the people and groups covered by the Equality Act.”

Introduction

We can only provide an effective service if we recognise the diversity that exists within our communities and enable our workforce to meet the needs and concerns of all our citizens. Equity and fairness underpin the work and ethos of the Council at all levels. Despite the harsh economic circumstances that we have faced as a Council we have continued to strive to achieve fairness in all our services and activities.

The Council’s Annual Equality Report on our progress on the Strategic Equality Plan (2020 -2024) is one of the ways in which the Council makes visible the extent to which it is meeting its obligations to recognise diversity and promote greater equality. Whilst certainly not the whole story, it speaks of our progress in relation to the five statutory equality objectives that the Council had set for itself in 2020. Considerable progression has been made on the issues that affect the broader well-being of our community, particularly amongst those who face disadvantages.

In this report we outline the activities that have had a greater significance to the Council’s progress in promoting greater equality and in meeting the Council’s responsibilities under the public duties contained within the Equality Act 2010.

Context

The Annual Strategic Equality Report is Torfaen County Borough Council’s progress on the Strategic Equality Plan. This report is for the financial year **April 1st 2023 – March 31st 2024**, and is the fourth of four annual reports for the Strategic Equality Plan 2020 - 2024.

The report focuses on the 5 Strategic Equality Objectives and completion of the actions that sit under each one.

Despite the highly challenging financial circumstances that the public sector continues operating in, the impacts that we are still witnessing in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic and our adaption and response to the cost-of-living crisis, the Council has nevertheless been able to make continued progress in numerous areas of its Equality Objectives, often through partnership working, harnessing the assets within our community – both people and places - and developing a coherent community focussed approach to delivering for Torfaen.

The Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010 brought together and replaced the previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. The majority of the Act came into force on 1 October 2010. The Act includes a **public sector equality duty** (the ‘general duty’). This came into force on 5 April 2011.

What is the general duty?

The aim of the general duty is to ensure that public authorities and those carrying out a public function can consider how they can positively contribute to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in their day-to-day activities. The duty ensures that equality considerations are built into the design of policies and the delivery of services and then kept under review. This will achieve better outcomes for all.

The council is required under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 to produce an annual monitoring report on the steps it has taken to meet the public sector equality duty and its own Equality Objectives. The Welsh Government was the first government to impose specific duties on public services over and above those required by the Act. The Act places a duty on public bodies to consider how to positively contribute to a fairer society through the delivery of services having due regard to eliminating discrimination.

Public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

This guidance refers to these three elements as the three ‘aims’ of the general duty and so when we discuss the general duty, we mean all three aims.

The general duty covers the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership*

- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality
- Religion or belief – including lack of belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

*It applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of the requirement to eliminate discrimination in employment.

The phrase 'protected group' is sometimes used to refer to people who share a protected characteristic.

Our Equality Objectives and Our Progress

There are five objectives that we work towards in our Strategic Equality Plan, they are:

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Objective 1 <i>Torfaen County Borough Council is an equal opportunity employer, with a workforce that is aware of and understands the importance of equality and diversity</i></p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Objective 2 <i>Ensure that people and communities have their rights respected and feel safe from violence and abuse</i></p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Objective 3 <i>Work to eliminate the disadvantages and barriers that make it hard for people to access the same opportunities as everyone else</i></p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Objective 4 <i>Involve people and communities in matters that are important to them and the decisions that we make</i></p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Objective 5 <i>Ensure the council complies with its statutory equality and Welsh language duties</i></p> |

There are **58 actions** across the five objectives. Progress towards the Strategic Equality Plan's objectives is a whole council approach and is dependent on all service areas displaying a commitment to their actions.

This reporting year we asked the lead officers:

- What progress was made during 2023/24?
- What challenges were experienced?
- To what extent are you happy with the progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?

By asking these particular questions we are able to understand the main achievements of the year and whether there is a collective challenge for officers in this area. They also help us to reflect on any continuing need and future effort or resources required.

Key Achievements for 2023/2024

Key achievements in this reporting year can be highlighted as:

- A new Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-2028 has been developed and published.
- Staff training opportunities on equality, diversity and inclusion topics have increased with arrival of the Thinqi platform.
- Torfaen Anti-Bullying Guidance and Policy for Education Settings (2024) has been reviewed and updated. Dialogue between schools and the local authority has improved; the number of confirmed incidents of bullying and harassment reported by school staff is increasing to become more aligned to national data and statistics.
- No Boundaries provided anti-racism training to both Elected Members and the Council's extended Leadership Team.

- Windrush was celebrated with an exhibition that was toured around Council buildings for several weeks.
- The West Gwent Community Cohesion team continued to promote and deliver many activities to champion inclusion and encourage a culture of empathy and fairness, including within schools and on social media.
- As part of the homes for Ukraine accommodation framework, Torfaen supported Welsh Government to relocate Ukrainians who arrived via the super sponsor scheme (welcome centres) into local authority areas. The closure of all welcome centres across Wales highlights the coordinated efforts and teamwork of WG, WSMP, and local authorities.
- We have carried out numerous actions to ensure where possible and practicable that there are no barriers to accessing services and buildings. Examples of such work include ramps, lifts, wider doors, doors with access controls, new accessible toilets, vision sensory colour scheme improvements, maintenance of accessible toilets, re-marking of accessible car spaces attached to buildings etc. All works compliant with BS8300 which is best practice guidance and Part M (DDA) of the Building Regulations.
- A range of Active Travel improvements have been made, taking into account people with disabilities, with regular engagement with Torfaen Access Forum.
- The Inspire youth engagement project opened the Inspire Café within the Civic Centre, providing barista and catering experience to young people.
- In 2023/24 the Financial Inclusion Team raised/saved their clients £125,492.95 via benefit claims, grant applications, reducing outgoings such as non-priority debts & non-priority bills etc. The Team prevented 38 cases from becoming homeless.
- The Homeseeker Team continue to work closely with Occupational Therapists in Social Care to ensure the needs of Torfaen residents are appropriately assessed to understand their needs. 93% of the 348 applicants on the register for people with an assessed need for adapted/accessible accommodation have either been assessed by OT or are awaiting an assessment following referral, an increase from 86% at the same point last year.
- 4,305 Dementia Friends have been made across 152 sessions during 2023 – 2024 and the Dementia Friends Network now has over 300 members.
- Work began to set up Dementia Hubs across Gwent, in response to citizen feedback gathered during the All-Wales Dementia Care Pathway of Standards engagement and the Gwent Population Needs Assessment. The Torfaen Hub will provide enhanced support regarding information, advice, and assistance for those receiving a dementia diagnosis.

Key Challenges Experienced in 2023/2024

The key challenges across the local authority for the reporting period have been highlighted as:

- Extensive internal and external consultation on the new Strategic Equality Plan, which required publication by 31st March, took the majority of the Equalities, Partnerships and Policy officer time in the second half of the year.
- Removal of the Partnerships, Policy and Equalities Manager role from the corporate structure during Quarter 1 has decreased capacity within PSSU.
- Violence Against Women, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Torfaen increased significantly.
- Whilst staff work tirelessly and often innovatively to create the change we want to see, they continue to report that impacts are often limited by available resources.

Progress Towards the Objectives

| Objective 1 | |
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| <i>Torfaen County Borough Council is an equal opportunity employer, with a workforce that is aware of and understands the importance of equality and diversity</i> | |
| Objective: 1 Action: A | Develop a suite of training on equality and diversity topics. |
| Reporting Officer: | Steven Honeywill |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| Wales-wide discussions with Learning Consortium Wales have led to development and adoption of the Thingi e-learning platform which now allows local authorities across Wales to co-develop a substantial online training offer. The Thingi platform is now live and at the time of writing this report (November 2024) there are 8 modules available within the 'equalities' section. Equalities officers from across Wales have met via the WLGA's Equality Officer Network and discussed suitable training topics for inclusion. Conversations will continue with the Learning and Development lead and Heads of Service to ensure the Council's workforce's needs are met in terms of understanding of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion issues and ensuring appropriate completion of relevant training. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| Whilst TCBC have continued to roll out our own mandatory equalities e-learning module over the last couple years, covering the essentials such as our legal duties, the opportunity to develop further training on a broad set of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion related topics has been limited by resources. It was recognised that a national platform was a much better option than duplicative effort of this nature right across Wales and a more realistic way of making progress. | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| We are now in a good position, with staff from various organisations working on new, additional modules and discussions will continue on developing the content further. | |
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| Objective: 1 Action: B | Develop the staff induction process and ensure that the values detailed in The Way We Work (including fair behaviour) are embedded in supervision and annual work appraisals. |
| Reporting Officer: | Angela Rogers |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| An initial review of Induction undertaken – complete review planned for 2024/25 One to one guidance was written and issued to managers/workforce, which embed the values of The Way We Work. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| Ensuring that the process would be suitable for a range of staff and available in different formats. | |

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| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| Further review planned for 2024/25. | |
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| Objective: 1 | Explore best practice in recruitment processes and conduct a review to ensure |
| Action: C | that we are recruiting as fairly as possible. |
| Reporting Officer: | Angela Rogers, Tina Hulme |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| New on-line recruitment module launched in IFOR the council's HR and Payroll system, and on-line training for managers is now available. Long term plan to further develop training for managers. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| N/A | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
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| Objective: 1 | Develop our knowledge of our workforce by improving the collection of |
| Action: D | workforce data to enable us to eliminate any inequalities. |
| Reporting Officer: | Angela Rogers |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| As the requirement for staff to declare information in relation to protected characteristics is not mandatory, and staff are often reluctant to declare this information, it is difficult to develop a full picture of the workforce. | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| As resources stand, officer time will have to focus on new recruitment and the new SEP commits to analysing recruitment data to demonstrate whether incoming staff cohorts are representative of Torfaen's population. | |
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| Objective: 1 | Promote Welsh Government's vision and principles of the Gender Equality |
| Action: E | Review to strive for the equal sharing of power, resources and influence for all women, men and non-binary people. |
| Reporting Officer: | Tina Hulme |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |

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| Removed | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |
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| Objective: 1 | Gender Pay Gap – progress gender equality in pay within the workforce. |
| Action: F | |
| Reporting Officer: | Tina Hulme |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| An analysis of the gender pay gap has been undertaken to understand if there are any pay differentials in the pay between genders within the grading structure. The analysis shows that the pay structure is robust and there are no significant pay inequalities. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| N/A | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |
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| Objective: 1 | Implement the Mental Health Strategy. |
| Action: G | |
| Reporting Officer: | Angela Rogers/Lisa Tyler |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| There has been considerable work undertaken in this area. The sickness absence policy has been revised to ensure that adequate support is available at appropriate times, to support staff if they are unwell. A wellbeing conversation has been added to the one-to-one meetings that are mandated for staff on a monthly basis, with wellbeing assessments introduced to support ongoing wellbeing. A suite of support has been sourced for staff. Working with Torfaen Leisure Trust (TLT), a partner membership rate to access TLT facilities has been agreed and promoted, together with a health assessment day. HR officers have been trained in I-Act, a course on managing and promoting positive mental health so that they can provide support to managers and staff. A monthly newsletter with access to services and advice has also been setup with the development of a website so that staff, who do not have access to IT systems can also access information. There is also a plan to establish mental health first aiders. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |
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| Objective: 1 | Develop and implement the Workforce Strategy. |

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| Action: H | |
| Reporting Officer: | Tina Hulme |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| The Workforce Strategy has been developed and agreed with a full programme of delivery. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| N/A | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
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| Objective: 1 | Promote awareness campaigns linked to Protected Characteristics. |
| Action: I | |
| Reporting Officers: | Chris Hunt/Harriet Leek/Bridie Saunders/Steven Honeywill |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| We have delivered and promoted many awareness campaigns in line with our annual awareness calendar. Equality campaigns delivered include Hate Crime Awareness Week, Black History Month, Interfaith Week, Ramadan, LGBT History Month, Pride Month, Holocaust Memorial Day and Refugee Awareness Day. Campaigns include primary and secondary school resources, community projects and engagements, social media, staff bulletins and training opportunities for staff. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| There have been national and international unrests throughout the year which have had an effect on social media campaigns, some of these being contentious and we have had to be considerate of this, not wanting to be adding to community tensions. | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| The Council, and in particular the West Gwent Community Cohesion Team, has celebrated and promoted commemorative days for many years, it is a way to promote key messages to challenge prejudice and ensures appropriate and truthful messages are shared online. | |
| There are a huge range of awareness campaigns throughout the year and we have focused on the key ones that align with Welsh Government expectations and plans and will continue to going forward. | |
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| Objective: 1 | Continue to be a Stonewall Diversity Champion and strive to be an inclusive workplace for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, and Transgender staff. |
| Action: J | |
| Reporting Officer: | Steven Honeywill |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| TCBC remain an active member of the Proud Councils network, attending Pride events in the region and Pride Cymru, and continued to be a member of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme until March 2024. We have been provided with a range of recommendations and | |

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| <p>feel comfortable that TCBC provides a safe employment environment for people identifying as LGBTQ+.</p> <p>Council Members formally confirmed the authority’s ongoing commitment to supporting a Torfaen Pride event to be held in June 2024, further to a motion from Cllr. Giles Davies. Cabinet Members confirmed that appropriate officers would continue to engage throughout the year with Club F.O.D to ensure a successful event.</p> | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| Freedom of Information requests relating to Stonewall membership and other LGBTQ+ supportive initiatives redirected a notable amount of officer time. | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| Over the lifetime of the SEP we have actively shown TCBC to be an inclusive organisation and made practical changes such as the inclusion of non-gendered single cubicle toilets alongside traditional male and female toilets within Civic Centre refurbishments, ensuring all staff are comfortable using available facilities. We have also maintained dedicated youth provision. We worked with Club F.O.D on the introduction of a Pride event in Torfaen and anticipate continuing to support the event and the LGBTQ+ community in these ways going forward. The SEP for 2024-2028 has committed to introducing Transitioning at Work Guidance, to support individuals, managers and colleagues. | |
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| Objective: 1 | Develop and implement Disability Confident action plan. |
| Action: K | |
| Reporting Officer: | Angela Rogers |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| Remains an ambition – however other priorities have restricted our ability to progress, this will be considered in next year’s delivery plan. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
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| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
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| <p>Objective 2 <i>Ensure that people and communities have their rights respected and feel safe from violence and abuse</i></p> | |
| Objective: 2 | Increase awareness of individual’s rights. |
| Action: A | |
| Reporting Officer: | Sarah Paxton |

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| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| As part of our duty to provide information, advice and assistance, people are supported to become aware of and understand their rights. One of the principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales legislation is that people have voice and control. We can sign post people to a range of advocacy services and advocacy support where this is required. The local authority commissions a range of advocacy support to enable people to understand their rights and to be supported to exercise their rights. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| Whilst people can be supported to understand their rights and entitlements, achieving the outcome they desire can be challenging. | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| Progress continues to be made against this action. Ensuring people can access information about rights across a range of media requires ongoing development. | |
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| Objective: 2 | Provide support to schools to embed fairness and equality in their schools plans and policies. |
| Action: B | |
| Reporting Officer: | Alison Dally |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| Torfaen Health Promoting Schools provide model policies and guidance for schools on a selection of health and wellbeing areas. For example, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), Substance Misuse Education, Nutrition, Physical Activity and Positive Relationships/Anti-Bullying. | |
| All policies are fair, equitable and based on the most recent Welsh Government guidance. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| Sourcing free, reputable, bilingual resources to support health and wellbeing policies and practice. | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| Progress against this action has been steady and we are confident that policies and guidance will be helpful to schools. | |
| Consultation with stakeholders (learners, staff, families and governors) regarding policies, practice and plans is essential. | |
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| Objective: 2 | Ensure all Torfaen schools have clear strategy for improving the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in secondary schools, to reduce within school variation so all pupils, including boys and vulnerable learners, make appropriate progress over time. |
| Action: C | |
| Reporting Officer: | Andy Rothwell |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |

- Several schools in Torfaen were involved in the development of the updated teaching and learning toolkit alongside colleagues from the EAS. This is now available to all schools to support the development of teaching and learning in the LA.
- 4 schools are providing holistic support for teaching to other schools.
- 7 schools are providing professional learning support to other schools across the EAS region in a variety of curriculum areas as Learning Network Schools.
- All schools are involved in the cluster curriculum assessment and progression programme which supports developing approaches based on focus and coherence.
- 2 schools receive bespoke support to develop Teaching and Leadership
- 1 school in Estyn category compared to 4 schools in 2020/2. 1 school was removed from a category in 2022/23.
- 6 schools lead professional learning supporting teaching and leadership across the EAS
- Every school is involved in the National Professional Enquiry project focusing on one of five main themes.
- The Curriculum for Wales 'Teaching and Learning Group' enhances school's ability to network and share practice.
- The EAS have redesigned the way in which professional learning is offered to schools.

What challenges were experienced?

Both LA and EAS have needed to remain sensitive and responsive to the needs of school as they have continued to face challenges resulting from the pandemic. Evidence suggests that the pandemic has affected some groups of learners more than others:

- Vulnerable and disadvantaged learners and those with ALN
- Learners I post-16 and into post-16 provision – where pressure and uncertainty may have affected confidence
- Early years where learners risk missing key developmental milestones for language, social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.
- Specific challenges for Welsh immersion learners in English speaking households, including learners transitioning from Years 6-7.

To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?

What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?

Generally pleased with the development of teaching and learning across the authority. The middle tier review in Wales has seen some changes to the way professional learning and support is delivered to schools, this will need to be considered when we think about the next steps in ensuring pupils are in receipt of effective teaching and learning.

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| Objective: 2 | Improve reporting of identity-based abuse, bullying and harassment in schools and take appropriate action as necessary. |
| Action: D | |

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| Reporting Officer: | Alison Dally |
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What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?

Torfaen Anti-Bullying Guidance and Policy for Education Settings (2024) has been reviewed and updated.

Small pilot of schools are using the safeguarding, software package My Concern to record and report incidents of bullying and discrimination.

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| <p>The number of confirmed incidents of bullying and harassment reported by school staff is increasing to become more aligned to national data and statistics.</p> <p>Draft Torfaen Anti-Racism Action Plan (2024 – 2027) created and being consulted upon (Local Authority Staff, Children and Young People, school staff, DARPL – Diversity and Anti-Racism Professional Learning, Cardiff Metropolitan University).</p> | |
| <p>What challenges were experienced?</p> | |
| <p>Capacity of one officer to oversee above. Not all schools in the Local Authority use My Concern. Primary Schools appear reluctant to report confirmed incidents of bullying. Consultation with stakeholders is time consuming.</p> | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> | |
| <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |
| <p>Progress against this action has been steady. Schools are keen to develop as anti-racist learning organisations.</p> | |
| <p>Objective: 2</p> | |
| <p>Action: E</p> | <p>Monitor the levels of hate incidences / crime in Torfaen via the Community Safety Hub. Implement any necessary actions.</p> |
| <p>Reporting Officer:</p> | <p>Cath Jones</p> |
| <p>What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?</p> | |
| <p>We continue to monitor hate incidents and crimes at the Community Safety Hub. Monthly reports are given by Gwent Police on hate crimes, and partnership support is put in place where needed. Monthly updates are received on hate incidents and wider community tensions from the cohesion team and we support them with school-based work to challenge views (such as misogyny) where there is an identified issue.</p> | |
| <p>What challenges were experienced?</p> | |
| <p>None</p> | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> | |
| <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |
| <p>Community tension updates have improved our understanding of issues in our communities and allowed us to better target resources where they are needed.</p> | |
| <p>Objective: 2</p> | |
| <p>Action: F</p> | <p>Provide staff training that raises awareness of equalities and Welsh language issues, empowering staff to identify and tackle discrimination and stereotyping.</p> |
| <p>Reporting Officer:</p> | <p>Steven Honeywill</p> |
| <p>What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?</p> | |
| <p>The Council's extended Leadership Team participated in Anti-Racism training with No Boundaries in February 2024, funded by WLGA. This followed No Boundaries providing a Members Seminar on the same topic earlier in the year.</p> <p>Welsh Language training continued to be delivered.</p> | |
| <p>What challenges were experienced?</p> | |
| <p>The Partnerships, Policy and Equalities Manager post was removed from the staff structure after Sarah Tipping left the organisation in early summer 2023. Due to the pressures of</p> | |

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| <p>developing and publishing a new Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-2028, there was no capacity within PSSU to source other training, or indeed to liaise with other teams on anything they may have sourced themselves.</p> | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |
| <p>The impacts of the Covid pandemic delayed progress on developing our e-learning offer, although this is now progressing well (see response to Action 1.A.). One of the positives of the pandemic however, was that it created a culture of increased meetings between equalities officers not only within Gwent but on a national scale. We have developed stronger relationships and consequently benefit from each other's knowledge, contacts and recommendations, working collaboratively and more efficiently and sharing experiences of training providers and other resources.</p> | |
| | |
| Objective: 2 | Work with local and regional partners on existing violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence issues to identify and tackle incidents. This includes issues of domestic abuse and sexual violence against men. |
| Action: G | |
| Reporting Officer: | Amy Thomas (Regional VAWDASV lead) |
| <p>What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?</p> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing dedicated resource for the implementation of the National Training Framework across the local authority ▪ Continued to be a member of the VAWDASV Strategic Delivery Group (which drives forward the implementation of the regional and national VAWDASV strategy) ▪ Supported the regional Domestic Homicide Review Planning Group as a key group member, in reviewing, sharing and disseminating learning from Domestic Homicides ▪ Supported the effectiveness of MARAC processes to provide protection and support for victims, including the review of the MARAC Operating Protocol ▪ Undertook campaigns around White Ribbon Day and Elder Abuse Awareness Day <p>Undertaken a comprehensive needs assessment around tackling perpetration</p> | |
| <p>What challenges were experienced?</p> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capacity of the workforce to attend training – training numbers are low for the National Training Framework ▪ Capacity of the workforce to attend meetings and find time/resource to drive forward the delivery plan elements relevant to TCBC <p>Availability of funding and resources to grow, develop and sustain VAWDASV services</p> | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |
| <p>Progress against this action will always be ongoing, however, progress within TCBC has been slow these last few years. There is some solid work going on in some areas of TCBC to work in partnership to identify and tackle VAWDASV (Community Safety, workforce development and Safeguarding Leads – corporate and education) and these areas are committed. The implementation of the Act is applicable across the whole of the council though so there are some departments where partnership working could improve.</p> | |

This year, through the tackling perpetration needs assessment and joint work with the Serious Violence Duty Partnership, the perpetration problem profile for Torfaen has outlined some concerning data. As an example, between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023:

- There were 15,032 VAWG offences; 2672 of these were in Torfaen
- Torfaen is second for VAWG crime in the region when adjusted for population figures
- Torfaen had 762 DA occurrences, 88 rape offences 148 other sexual offences (OSO)
- 10- to 17-year-old males make up the highest number of suspects/offenders of RASSO with 10- to 17-year-old females the highest number of victims – this is likely linked to peer on peer abuse and exploitation as school/college was the second most reported location for serious sexual offences
- Torfaen has seen an increase of 34% in Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) over the last five years – Llantarnam has the highest five-year average followed by Abersychan and Fairwater
- Torfaen has six wards within the top 20 wards in Gwent with the highest crime rate for RASSO
- Between December 2021 and December 2023 there were 7 residents of Torfaen open to Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) as they were considered high-risk serial perpetrators; there were 7 children/young people linked to these nominals
- There continues to be a year-on-year increase in referrals at MARAC across the local authority
- Stalking and harassment has increased in Torfaen by 26% in the last five-year period – Abersychan has the highest 5-year average, followed by Blaenavon and Llantarnam

In light of this, there needs to be more of a commitment and investment by Members and senior leaders to implement arrangements for the prevention, protection and support for gender-based violence; especially tackling perpetration. Without this, we are not going to see a reduction in perpetration, domestic homicides and there will be an ever-increasing need for victim services and demand on social care, housing and wider services such as substance use, mental health etc.

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| Objective: 2 | |
| Action: H | Work with partners to prevent and raise awareness of violent extremism. |
| Reporting Officer: | Cath Jones |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| We continue to work with partners to prevent and raise awareness of violent extremism through Channel, Gwent Prevent and Torfaen Protect, Secure, Preparedness, Group. To improve prevent in Torfaen, we are working on a Torfaen prevent group with a Torfaen specific risk assessment rather than the previous overarching Gwent assessment. Training has been provided to over 300 colleagues in 23/24 and new face to face learning modules are being developed nationally for local delivery. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| Monitoring levels of training can be difficult as the Home Office are unable to track the number of people completing online prevent training. Working towards a new system to improve this for Torfaen, using Thinqi. | |

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| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| Making improvements to shift to a local rather than regional focus. Developing ways to improve training in Torfaen. | |
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| Objective: 2 | Advocate community diversity. |
| Action: I | |
| Reporting Officer: | Chris Hunt |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| <p>The Community Safety and Community Cohesion team continue to work on small projects that promote community cohesion in Torfaen, engaging with minority communities and involving them in developing initiatives to promote community cohesion based on the needs of that community and the wider community.</p> <p>The Cohesion Team hosted a further social event with Ukrainian guests, which brought together over 50 guests (and their hosts) who have been resettled in Torfaen. Lunch and refreshments were made available alongside children’s activities; inflatables, music, arts and crafts which helped in creating a fun afternoon where guests and their hosts met to network, share experiences and to build peer support groups to continue strengthening their wellbeing. In conjunction with Torfaen Museum, archives were collated on Refugee resettlement throughout the years and the history of Torfaen and Ukraine in a presentation to showcase the diversity in Torfaen.</p> <p>Promotion of key equalities dates over this period have included Hate Crime Awareness Week, Black History Month, LGBT History month, Interfaith week and GRT History Month. We have worked along-side partners such as Gwent Police to host an Interfaith Display and present school assemblies on Hate Crime along with showcasing the Windrush Exhibition through varies locations across Torfaen which displayed stories of the Windrush Generation from Race Cymru.</p> <p>Aside from the campaigns, we have supported a community project through our small grant funding. Amgueddfa Torfaen Museum and West Monmouth Secondary school created an exhibition celebrating GRT History through focusing on their traditions, culture and heritage. The project worked alongside local poet Patrick Jones and photographer Jon Poutney. The exhibition continues to be on display at the museum and advocates the diversity of our community.</p> <p>Primary School activities have taken place throughout the year, in 7 Torfaen Schools. This workshop promotes diversity and focuses on similarities and differences throughout pupils. This workshop has targeted over 200 children in Year 5 and 6.</p> <p>Our Valleys Voices Podcast continues to grow with the regional podcast providing a platform for lesser heard voices, sharing local stories from minority community members from a variety of background. Episodes added this year includes a two-part story of a refugee from Ukraine who fled the Russian invasion, along with a Holocaust survivor sharing his story.</p> | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| Engagement with hard-to-reach groups remains a challenge. | |

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| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| Work needs to continue in fostering good relations as our community is becoming more diverse and wider discourse, particularly on social media and online, is increasingly divisive. The Cohesion team will continue to look at best ways to bring people together, whether that be in person or within virtual spaces. creating opportunities to share knowledge and correct information with staff and the local communities. | |
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| Objective: 2 | Monitor community tensions. |
| Action: J | |
| Reporting Officer: | Chris Hunt |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| We continue to understand ongoing and emerging community tensions and put in place processes and procedures to address them as required. | |
| Work to support tension monitoring and sharing of information with partners continues. We engage with biweekly partnership tasking, multi-agency meetings, CONTEST and Prevent groups. This also involves meetings set up with Gwent Police's Cohesion Unit and our East Gwent counterparts where we exchange information on tensions within the area and on a Pan Gwent basis. | |
| We collate a monthly tensions tracker of any local and/or national tensions identified. This is shared with relevant partners for information purposes and to mitigate any tensions when required. | |
| The Cohesion Team also attend the regional Contest board | |
| Key roles in the group include: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on cohesion tensions • Undertake an exercise to map out training opportunities • Monthly tension reported - submitted by the regional Police force analyst. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| None reported | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| To continue to provide tension monitoring reports through agreed channels. | |
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| Objective: 2 | Engage with EU nationals with regards to the EU Settlement Scheme. |
| Action: K | |
| Reporting Officer: | Chris Hunt |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| The EUSS is now closed | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |

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| N/A | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| Not applicable - the EUSS is now closed | |
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| Objective: 2 | Continue the LA's engagement with the UK Refugee Resettlement Scheme. |
| Action: L | |
| Reporting Officer: | Chris Hunt |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torfaen has continued to support Ukrainians moving into the borough via the 'homes for Ukraine' scheme. We have supported 130+ Ukrainians since the inception of the scheme, the LA continues to play an active role in supporting sponsors/host and their guests to access services and to integrate into their new lives in Wales. • Over 50% of Ukrainians are now living independently • The LA continues to offer some financial support through a £1500 'move on' grant to assist them in progressing into the private rented accommodation sector. • We continue to provide a sponsor/host top up to the national 'thankyou' payment to incentivise hosts to continue their hosting arrangements. • As part of the homes for Ukraine accommodation framework, Torfaen supported Welsh Government (WG) to relocate Ukrainians who arrived via the super sponsor scheme (welcome centres) into local authority areas. The closure of all welcome centres across Wales highlights the coordinated efforts and teamwork of WG, WSMP, and local authorities. • Torfaen continues to offer comprehensive support to Ukrainian individuals and families, addressing a wide range of needs that have been identified. This holistic approach includes providing assistance with housing, healthcare, education, employment, and social integration. By working closely with various agencies and community organisations, Torfaen ensures that Ukrainians receive the necessary resources and support to rebuild their lives and integrate into the local community. This ongoing commitment highlights Torfaen's dedication to addressing the diverse and evolving needs of those affected by the conflict in Ukraine. • Torfaen has continued to support Afghan Resettlement into the borough with the latest family arriving through the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme. A family of 4 arrived in March 2023. • Torfaen has welcomed 12 individuals to the borough in 2023/24 through the Asylum Dispersal Scheme. This includes three families, comprising six adults and six children. • We remain engaged in discussions with clearsprings ready homes and partners to ensure all appropriate support is available for new arrivals. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordability and availability of suitable properties continues to be a challenge for Ukrainians wanting to move into independent living. • Language barriers have prevented Ukrainians from retaining jobs that match their often high skill levels • Supporting Asylum dispersal with limited funding | |

To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?

What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?

- Importance of Comprehensive Support - Providing holistic support that addresses housing, healthcare, education, employment, and social integration is crucial. This approach ensures that refugees and asylum seekers can rebuild their lives effectively and integrate into the community
- The ongoing challenge of finding affordable and suitable housing highlights the need for continued efforts to increase the availability of properties. This may involve working with housing providers and exploring innovative housing solutions.
- Funding - Ensuring sustainable and adequate funding will be critical for maintaining and expanding support services.
- Language barriers have been a significant challenge, particularly in helping refugees retain jobs that match their skill levels. Future plans should include enhanced language support services to improve employment outcomes and overall integration.

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| Objective: 2 | Undertake a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment. |
| Action: M | |

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| Reporting Officer: | Adrian Wilcock |
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What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?

The draft Torfaen 2020 Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), which covers the period 2020-2033, was submitted to the Welsh Government in February 2020; and was finally approved by the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip in July 2024. Following a full Welsh translation, the GTAA was published on the Council’s [planning](#) and [housing](#) webpages in September 2024.

What challenges were experienced?

The main challenge was the delay in the Welsh Government approving the GTAA, due to significant staff shortages.

To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?

What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?

1. The **GTAA Steering Group** (of housing, environmental health, equalities, research and planning officers; the Torfaen Traveller Education Service; the Gwent Gypsy and Traveller Service (Pobl Group); representatives from the local Torfaen Gypsy & Traveller community; with analytical advice from Opinion Research Services (ORS) Ltd; input from Travelling Ahead; and oversight of the Executive Members for Adult Services & Housing; Economy, Skills & Regeneration; and Corporate Governance & Performance) did an excellent job in securing a high level of response from the Torfaen Gypsy & Traveller community to the accommodation needs questionnaire and producing the Torfaen GTAA in accordance with the WG ‘Undertaking GTAA’s’ Guidance, 2015.
2. Future efforts and for consideration in the SEP for 2024-2028:-
 - A. **Monitor & deliver new permanent Gypsy & Traveller pitches as identified in the 2020 Torfaen GTAA (Simon Rose)** - The Council has a legal duty to provide for any unmet

accommodation needs for permanent & transit Gypsy & Traveller pitches from the GTAA; noting no transit need was identified.

B. Address any unmet need for permanent & transit Gypsy and Traveller pitches in the Torfaen Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) (Adrian Wilcock) - The Council has a legal duty to address any unmet accommodation needs for permanent & transit Gypsy & Traveller pitches from the GTAA in the Torfaen RLDP, currently being produced. This duty will be considered in the **Housing Background Paper** to be produced alongside the Torfaen RLDP: Preferred Strategy (expected Summer 2025); including an assessment of any additional need from 2033-2037. If identified, any unmet need will be addressed by site allocations(s) in the **Deposit Torfaen RLDP** (expected Summer 2026). In addition, the **Welsh Government** intend to commission (24/25) an external organisation to engage with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities to understand their needs in relation to the provision of transit facilities, and work with local authorities to understand their localised evidence base; and make **recommendations for the most appropriate locations for transit sites in South Wales in 2025**. Officers (environmental health, planning & housing) will need to engage in this work; and the Council will need to consider any recommendations in the Deposit RLDP if needed.

C. Produce a new Torfaen Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment in 2026/27 (Adrian Wilcock) - the Council has a statutory duty to submit a new Torfaen GTAA to the Welsh Government by 24th February 2027. Therefore, the GTAA Steering Group (plus the Council's Gypsy & Traveller Champion) will start this work in Summer 2026; noting that the 2015 WG GTAA Guidance is to be reviewed before then.

Objective 3

Work to eliminate the disadvantages and barriers that make it hard for people to access the same opportunities as everyone else

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| Objective: 3 | Improve the Torfaen community's built environment and the wider accessibility of the Council's public buildings and places of work within affordable means. |
| Action: A | |
| Reporting Officer: | Dan Morris |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| We are delivering an ongoing programme of building improvements to ensure the main places of work across the borough are accessible to all, this has been predominantly schools for year 2023/24. We have carried out numerous actions to ensure where possible and practicable that there are no barriers to accessing services and buildings. Examples of such work include ramps, lifts, wider doors, doors with access controls, new accessible toilets, vision sensory colour scheme improvements, maintenance of accessible toilets, re-marking of accessible car spaces attached to buildings etc. All works compliant with BS8300 which is best practice guidance and Part M (DDA) of the Building Regulations. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| Insufficient resources, financial restrictions, and staffing | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |

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| Targeting limited funds to evidenced based requirements. Plus all new works is compliant with BS8300 (best practice guidance) and Part M of Building regulations. | |
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| Objective: 3 Action: B | Continue the prioritisation process so that improvements will be made within the available resources and that the improvements are targeted to provide the greatest community and inclusive benefit. |
| Reporting Officer: | Dan Morris |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| Property maintenance/improvement works based on evidenced based condition surveys across the entire Council estate are reviewed/revisited at least annually. This prioritisation process serves to ensure, as far as possible, that potential barriers to accessing facilities are identified and prioritised for funding/action where resources allow. DDA works to schools are based on Occupational Therapist visits as well. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| Insufficient resources, financial restrictions, and staffing | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| Targeting limited funds to evidenced based requirements. Plus all new works is compliant with BS8300 (best practice guidance) and Part M of Building regulations. | |
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| Objective: 3 Action: C | Continue the prioritisation process to be operational and address accessibility issues within the Council's renovation and repair programme. |
| Reporting Officer: | Dan Morris |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| The Council's renovation and repair programme is helping to remove barriers to services and buildings. Where possible, our planned maintenance works ensure that buildings are accessible including ensuring new doors are wide enough, contrasting colours are used in redecoration schemes, lifts/induction loops/automatic doors are maintained regularly and kept in good operational condition, use of wayfinding signage, etc. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| Insufficient resources, financial restrictions, and staffing | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| Targeting limited funds to evidenced based requirements. Plus all new works is compliant with BS8300 (best practice guidance) and Part M of Building regulations. | |
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| Objective: 3 Action: D | Continue implementation of a number of schemes. Typically, these will be the removal of physical barriers to access buildings across the Council's building asset. Also apply to community settings effecting the mobility and access of disabled people on public highways and public walkways. For example, the introduction of dropped crossings using the Council's own capital funding and via other funding sources for schemes including Safe Routes in Communities. |

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| Reporting Officers: | Donna Edwards-John |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| <p>Various Dropped Kerbs have been installed making the network more accessible through Active Travel Funding. The locations have been chosen through an Active Travel prioritisation assessment. Dropped kerbs have also been installed from the TCBC Capital budget in response to specific enquiries received and individually assessed.</p> <p>Installation of cycle/scooter storage Active Travel School Plans have been created in several schools and have identified barriers preventing pupils taking cycles/scooter into school sites from lack of storage facilities. Through Active Travel funding storage has been provided and is being utilised by pupils.</p> <p>Repair Station The first repair station in Torfaen has been installed in Blaenavon Heritage Centre after being requested by residents to help assist with repair to cycles, encouraging active travel and sustainability reducing cycles being sent to landfill.</p> <p>Link path to Griffithstown Primary from Panteg House further to the completion of the Active Travel School Plan, it was identified that parents weren't being encouraged to use the excellent park & stride facility at Panteg House during school drop off and pick up times due to the problem walking through the entrance which was mixed vehicle/walking access. A new link path was installed at Panteg House giving safe walking access to the path leading into the school entrance. Cycle/scooter storage has also been included at the site to promote active travel.</p> <p>An extension to the shared route into Llantarnam CP which is fully accessible has been installed through Active Travel Funding and SRiC funding has been extended using active travel funding around the perimeter of the Court Farm field connecting to the Llantarnam Industrial estate in preparation for the proposed new footbridge to the industrial estate. The path has also given access to James Prosser Way and a further gate for pedestrians has been installed on the east side of the school, encouraging active travel journeys to the school site. In addition to additional dropped kerbs in the area.</p> <p>Zebra Crossing at Brangwyn Avenue further to the completion of the Active Travel School Plan, it was identified over several years that a safe crossing point was required at the location. A zebra crossing was installed through active travel funding encouraging active travel journeys.</p> <p>Cwmbran Drive Continuing on from the beginning last year, further active travel improvements are being designed at present for other sections of Cwmbran Drive. It is anticipated that some construction work will be completed later this financial year and will be reported on next year.</p> <p>Consultation and Engagement Regular attendance by the Active Travel Team to Torfaen Access Forum (TAF) takes place to gather feedback on routes, and onsite meetings to walk through routes take place when requested and to look at any issues. It is an important part of active travel to consult with all abilities to encourage fully inclusive active travel.</p> | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| Weather related problems encountered which were beyond our control | |

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| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| The work has further encouraged active travel journeys where work has been carried out. Further consultation from residents to feed into plans. | |
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| Objective: 3 | Through building physical accessibility improvements into the standard estate management process. |
| Action: E | |
| Reporting Officer: | Dan Morris |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| <p>10 schools had works carried out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Albans – hoists, lifts, ramps, door widening accessible WC’s, handrails. • Pontnewydd Primary – access control units and platform lift • Llantarnam Primary – door access and security works • Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw – 2 accessible toilets • Greenmeadow Primary – Visual impairment works • Ysgol Bronnen - Visual impairment works • Glanrafon Primary – door access controls • Griffithstown Primary – door access controls and platform lift • Paedre Pio - Visual impairment works • Ponthir Primary – handrailing | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| The time frame of working within school holiday periods. | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
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| Objective: 3 | Monitor young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), or who are “at risk” of becoming NEET and provide support programmes to help individuals secure employment, education or training. |
| Action: F | |
| Reporting Officer: | Gareth Jones |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| <p>Good. We have established monitoring and support processes in place for all year 10 and 11 pupils in school who are designated as ‘at risk’ of becoming NEET, and work with the secondary schools on referrals to the Inspire project for those that the school consider in need of additional support. We have a linked Inspire officer based in each secondary school and target ALL young people for contact leaving year 11 but with special emphasis on those with no or uncertain post 16 EET destinations for whom we direct support and provide needs-led support including engagement; access to additional training and vocational licenses; transport etc. and provide significant one to one support to get some young people (100+) to help get them towards and into EET provision. The access to the Inspire project funding and staffing was essential in supporting young people and helping to reduce some of the barriers created including monetary and previous lack of attendance/engagement in school.</p> | |

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| What challenges were experienced? | |
| <p>1. Greater number of young people leaving from year 11 who have barriers to progression into EET including much higher anxiety and stress; lack of knowledge of appropriate and local post 16 EET provision; and other barriers. Post COVID issues have created some of these additional issues in some young people and their families which make them more difficult to engage and more anxious in progressing into EET provision.</p> <p>2. Lack of appropriate local post 16 vocational training and education. For example. all vocational FE courses available to year 11 leavers are out of Torfaen Council areas e.g. Cross Keys; Newport; Ebbw Vale which creates another barrier for some young people to access courses. The JGW+ providers who are also funded to work with young people on leaving school are generally full or require a young person to find their own work placement provider which again creates a real challenge.</p> <p>3. Lack of knowledge of post 16 EET options and expectations by young people; families and in some cases schools. We produced and paid for a post 16 options booklet for all pupils but relied on schools to circulate to all pupils primarily. There is also a lack of pre 16 opportunities to experience vocational activity within schools to give young people more of an idea of employer expectations. We did put in place some work experience opportunities for some young people within the Inspire project but there is the need to make this much more significant.</p> | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| <p>Content with the continued progress in helping to reduce NEET number of young people in Torfaen because of having in place significant monitoring and support, but there is the need to ensure that the work to support and engage the most at risk of becoming NEET young people in Torfaen continues and develops.</p> <p>There is also the need to develop much greater local vocational and appropriate post 16 EET opportunities for young people within Torfaen, and there is a developing 'brain drain' of academic and well supported 16 year olds to post 16 provision outside of Torfaen and also a real lack of local and accessible level 1 and 2 vocational training and education provision for other 16 year olds leaving schools? Those areas will feedback into 2024-28 equalities planning as clear requirements going forward to provide an equitable accessible post 16 EET programme for Torfaen young people.</p> | |
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| Objective: 3 | Deliver economic development and regeneration interventions which have a focus on creating socio-economic opportunities for younger residents and for our most deprived communities. |
| Action: G | |
| Reporting Officer: | Carla Kavanagh |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| <p>The Council was successful in its application for Levelling Up funding from the UK Government, securing £7.6M for 3 regeneration projects in Pontypool Town Centre. These will be fully designed in 2025/26 and delivered in 2026/2027 and 2027/28. The Council has also continued to deliver the Welsh Government Transforming Towns programme, with a £2.5M grant to</p> | |

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| <p>support significant regeneration in Gwent Square, Cwmbran and with the development of several smaller projects in Blaenavon and Pontypool Town Centres through the Placemaking Programme. Each of these projects will lead to new employment opportunities (food and drink, leisure, construction, culture).</p> <p>These projects are all delivering against our Placemaking Plans which captured the priorities and challenges of younger residents in all 3 towns.</p> <p>In addition, the Council has allocated Shared Prosperity Funding to continue delivering employability and NEETs programmes.</p> | |
| <p>What challenges were experienced?</p> | |
| <p>The financial implications of the cost-of-living crisis and Covid pandemic have continued to affect property owners' ability to invest in regeneration schemes.</p> <p>Economic inactivity continues to be a priority with an increase in older residents leaving the labour market and an increase in long-term ill health following the pandemic.</p> | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> | |
| <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |
| <p>Future focus will be to deliver the approved Transforming Towns and Levelling Up funding projects.</p> | |
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| <p>Objective: 3 Action: H</p> | <p>Deliver a comprehensive library service which increases young people's access to quality learning materials, supports the most vulnerable to manage their own health and wellbeing, and support vulnerable job seekers to access opportunities online and access skills development and job opportunities.</p> |
| <p>Reporting Officer:</p> | <p>Stephanie Morgan</p> |
| <p>What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?</p> | |
| <p>Business as usual activities including ongoing stock resource development and replenishment, a designated Health & Wellbeing Professional in post and a programme of H&WB activities including a 1-1- support and signposting service, and specific H&WB stock resources, including Reading Well and mental health collections. On-site partner organisations help ensure a joined-up approach to health and wellbeing provision and offer a quick referral service for customers. We continue to work with TCBC employability partners to provide IT and employment support across all three libraries.</p> <p>Cwmbran Library will undergo a major refurbishment in early in 2025 – this will result in a better customer journey through the library with reconfigured spaces, enhanced digital provision and a higher profile health & wellbeing area. A programme of wellbeing activities will be developed to showcase the new facilities during 2025-26.</p> | |
| <p>What challenges were experienced?</p> | |
| <p>Low staffing across the service this year due to long term sickness and a lack of casual staff have had some impact. Low take-up of the H&WB 1-1s has resulted in us exploring other ways to highlight the service, including collaboration with the TCBC Customer Services Team to help identify some of their customers that could benefit from the support offered. A higher profile H&Wb area post-refurb and some targeted events will attract more interest in this service.</p> | |

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| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| A higher profile health and well-being area will be developed. | |
| | |
| Objective: 3 | Support, protect and enable vulnerable people to achieve positive outcomes and well-being. |
| Action: I | |
| Reporting Officer: | Sarah Paxton |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| <p>The Social Service and Wellbeing Wales Act requires the council to provide Information, Advice and Assistance. We offer people an assessment of their needs via a 'What Matters conversation'. The assessment focuses on strengths and assets applying a hierarchy of support, enabling people to identify their own solutions to achieve positive wellbeing. Where this can only be achieved via statutory intervention, we agree with the person how their needs will be met and develop with them a care and support plan, or if it is a carer a support plan that identifies their personal outcomes.</p> <p>Adult Services is working closely with communities to use our data to identify opportunities for prevention and early intervention to focus on wellbeing and the social determinants of health.</p> | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| The increasing demand for adult services can make this very challenging | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| There is a need to place more focus on community development and population health measures linked to Marmot principles and wellbeing outcomes | |
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| Objective: 3 | Promote safeguarding issues and engage more widely with disabled and vulnerable children. |
| Action: J | |
| Reporting Officer: | Claire Worlock |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| <p>Torfaen's Disabled Children's team promote safeguarding and engagement with disabled and vulnerable children through a multi-faceted approach. This includes providing multi-disciplinary care planning, access to appropriate support services, effective advocacy and ensuring smooth transitions from childhood to adulthood. They emphasize partnerships with other agencies, co-production with families, and recreational support services that are valued by children and their families. Additionally, direct payment systems and assessments for carers are available to promote autonomy and support for families.</p> <p>Evaluations highlight strengths in the team's dedication and effectiveness in fostering multi-agency collaboration, leading to positive outcomes for children. They have also worked to ensure children and families have access to tailored resources when needed.</p> <p>Engagement is promoted through an informed assessment of need and through the use of bespoke means of communication. This ensures wishes and feelings are sought and that children are as fully involved as possible in their care planning.</p> | |

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| <p>The communication style is specific to each child and can include the use of specialist tools and interventions informed by a 'Communication passport' which supports social workers (and others) to understand the child's communication needs, or Personal Behaviour Support (PSB) plans, developed by Child and Adolescent Learning Disability Service (CALDS), which also support parents and professionals to engage with the child, manage risks associated with behaviours and needs, safely and effectively.</p> | |
| <p>What challenges were experienced?</p> | |
| <p>Key challenges include addressing gaps in resource, particularly as demand for these services grow, in particular respite care and short breaks, which are difficult to source.</p> | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> | |
| <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |
| <p>The service will continue to evolve in response to the needs of disabled and vulnerable children, with further improvements in partnership working with professionals, children and families. And through the promotion of effective, high quality support services to meet identified needs.</p> | |
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| <p>Objective: 3</p> | <p>Integrate consideration of the socio-economic duty into strategic decision-making processes.</p> |
| <p>Action: K</p> | |
| <p>Reporting Officer:</p> | <p>Sarah Tipping</p> |
| <p>What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?</p> | |
| <p>Completed in a previous year.</p> | |
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| <p>Objective: 3</p> | <p>Reduce the economic disadvantage and poverty faced by those with a specific protected characteristic (e.g. disability, age) as a result of reduced access to the opportunity for work and insufficient welfare support.</p> |
| <p>Action: L</p> | |
| <p>Reporting Officer:</p> | <p>David Leech</p> |
| <p>What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?</p> | |
| <p>Employability programmes continued to be delivered in 2023/24 supporting those with work-limiting health conditions to seek, secure and progress in employment. Much of this work is funded through Shared Prosperity Fund and C4W+ and is being considered further as part of the Preventative Services review.</p> | |
| <p>What challenges were experienced?</p> | |
| <p>Engaging preventative support earlier and ensuring community support is embedded as part of any support programmes so that outcomes are sustained.</p> | |
| <p>Ongoing uncertainty surrounding future funding and priorities for employability at the national level</p> | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> | |
| <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |

The employability teams have delivered significant outcomes for individual residents and many residents have progressed into employment as a result of the committed work of employability teams. But the proportion of economic inactivity in Torfaen linked to ill-health remains high, and further consideration is needed on how the system can help to deliver a sustained improvement at a population level. This is being considered as part of the Preventative Services review.

Objective: 3

Action: M Assist individuals facing hardship to access appropriate benefits and secure income with a view to enabling them to sustain accommodation.

Reporting Officer: Lesley Groves

What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?

The Housing Service has a dedicated Financial Inclusion Team who provide advice and support to households in financial difficulty, most of whom are struggling to manage the costs associated with their current home/borrowing/lending. During 2023/24 the Financial Inclusion Team supported 61 clients (25 of which still remain involved with the team) The service provides in depth support to clients for up to a period of 2 years to work with the clients to deal with route causes & to assist with in depth budgeting skills, accessing employment and training opportunities to improve their financial situations.

In 2023/24 the Financial Inclusion Team raised/saved their clients £125,492.95 via benefit claims, grant applications, reducing outgoings such as non-priority debts & non-priority bills etc. The Team prevented 38 cases from becoming homeless as a result of their interventions.

What challenges were experienced?

The team faced a number of challenges throughout the year around accessing the relevant benefits for clients, this was mainly around claims and appeals for PIP applications and Limited Capability for work, due to the amount of applications being submitted with only two small teams in Torfaen who are trained fully to complete applications and appeals, there has been a longer turn around in application and decisions being made. The team are due to undergo training in the coming months in order to be able to complete these and appeals. This should assist with the pressure on other services and make the waiting time for clients a lot quicker.

To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?

What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?

The financial inclusion team remain a significant asset to the prevention of homelessness and improving the financial difficulties that our clients face. With the current cost of living crisis and ongoing concerns of homelessness it is vital that we invest in the training of our staff to allow them to continue to deliver vital appropriate and sufficient financial advice to all clients that access the service.

Objective: 3

Action: N Assist individuals to access suitable, affordable accommodation based on their needs and requirements.

Reporting Officer: Lesley Groves

What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?

In 2023/24 the Homeseeker Team processed and activated 1,416 applications joining the housing register which were carefully assessed and prioritised according to their needs.

During that time 484 households were accommodated with one of our partner Housing Associations.

What challenges were experienced?

We are seeing smaller numbers of properties becoming available via our Housing Association partners which is resulting in longer waiting times for people seeking homes.

There is a greater reliance on the social rented sector due to the growing difficulties people are facing in sourcing affordable options elsewhere in the housing market (due to growing costs of purchasing and renting a home).

The Housing Service are dealing with a growing number of people with diverse/complex needs in unsuitable housing.

To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?

What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?

Through the continued work of collaboration and partnership working, the allocation of homes continues to develop and ensure families have access to good quality affordable homes

Housing will continue to work closely with Homeseeker partners to ensure we make best use of the limited resource of social housing stock to help those most in need.

Whilst the Social Housing Grant programme has seen a decrease in land availability housing association partners continue to deliver affordable housing to meet the needs of the most vulnerable households in Torfaen, this includes general needs, adapted/supported and shared accommodation

To ensure continuity of the delivery of affordable housing it is essential that the working relationships continue to develop further.



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| Objective: 3 | Ensure individuals faced with homelessness are provided with support and assistance to prevent homelessness where practicable to do so. |
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| Reporting Officer: | Lesley Groves |
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What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?

Housing continued to receive a high number of presentations from households who were under the threat of homeless. In 2023/24 880 households were assisted. The housing Solutions team offers advice and assistance to prevent homelessness as much as possible, significant wight has been placed on prevention measures with over 155 of the 880 existing tenancies being saved in the early stages of support.

Over the past year the number of private landlords withdrawing from the rental sector has slowed however this remains as pressure on households becoming homeless. Further training and support have been put in place with an additional housing solutions officer now in place.

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| <p>The Young Persons housing officer post has been revised with greater emphasis being placed on supporting young people transitioning into independent living at an earlier stage.</p> <p>Through the work of the housing intervention team waiting times for permanent housing has now decreased, housing has also seen a decrease in households remaining in temporary accommodation over 6 months with singles waiting approx. 8-10 months and families 4-6 months.</p> | |
| <p>What challenges were experienced?</p> | |
| <p>Torfaen has seen a decrease in the temporary accommodation stock due to landlords leaving the scheme to achieve higher market rents.</p> <p>There has been a significant increase in presentation from individuals requiring high levels of support e.g. prison leavers, mental health, drug and alcohol. This impacts on the ability to source permanent accommodation options.</p> <p>The private rented sector has also seen a significant increase in rental charges resulting in the tenure being unaffordable for many people, this impact then places greater pressure on the social housing register</p> <p>There has been a decrease in social housing becoming vacant which again places greater pressure on homelessness having less accommodation available to provide suitable move on accommodation</p> <p>Some housing associations have also seen a decrease in the rate of which void properties are turned around, this impacts households currently in temporary accommodation being able to move on.</p> | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> | |
| <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |
| <p>Through the development of Torfaen Rapid Rehousing plan, a variety of housing options has been increased to assist homeless households, seeing an increase in the availability of supported/adapted accommodation, TCBC housing lease properties from housing associations for those individuals who require significant support in the initial stages of living independently, generally for a 12 month period, following the assessment period the property then reverts to the individual, this approach enables independent living, reassurance to the landlord and results in a higher rates of successful tenancies.</p> <p>The plan places a greater emphasis on swifter move on times along with the development of more housing related support options. The housing intervention team now follows homeless households for a period of 12 months following them securing permanent housing, this has seen a reduction in the number of failed tenancies.</p> | |
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| <p>Objective: 3</p> | <p>Ensure that those in need of accessible accommodation have assistance to secure accommodation suitable for their needs.</p> |
| <p>Action: P</p> | |
| <p>Reporting Officer:</p> | <p>Lesley Groves</p> |
| <p>What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?</p> | |

As at the 22nd April 2024 there were 348 active applications on the register for people with an assessed need for adapted/accessible accommodation. The Homeseeker Team continue to work closely with Occupational Therapists in Social Care to ensure the needs of Torfaen residents are appropriately assessed to understand their needs. 93% of the 348 applicants above have either been assessed by OT or are awaiting an assessment following referral (86% at the same point last year).

In 2023/24, 105 applicants with an assessed need for accessible/adapted homes were rehoused via the Homeseeker register.

In 2023/24, 55 properties were advertised by our partner Housing Associations specifically giving preference to applicants with a need for accessible/adapted homes.

What challenges were experienced?

As with wider general needs housing stock, we continue to see a reduction in the numbers of properties becoming available for applicants in this cohort requiring a new home.

In addition to barriers around affordability for this cohort in accessing accommodation in the private rented sector, private landlords are often reluctant to allow adaptations to their properties via the DFG process creating a further reliance on a limited social rented sector.

The Housing Service are dealing with a growing number of people with diverse/complex needs in unsuitable housing. It can be challenging to help applicants with complex medical needs to source suitable accommodation in a timely manner due to the available stock and wider issues around funding for adaptations and demands on Occupational Therapists.

To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?

What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?

Housing has continued to improve the data held to understand the needs of residents seeking rehousing to inform wider strategy/policy development.

Working with Homeseeker Partners on developing a better understanding of the Housing Stock available, particularly those more accessible/adaptable to meet the needs of applicants with mobility issues is enabling a great number of people with diverse/complex needs access suitable accommodation

Work has commenced with RSL partners to ensure properties that benefit from specific adaptations/features suitable for people with mobility needs are utilised to meet those with an applicable need, for example allocating wheelchair accessible homes to those that require a wheelchair accessible property.

Objective: 3 | Seek to provide positive outcomes for rough sleepers in addressing their accommodation, support, social and health needs.

Action: Q

Reporting Officer: | Lesley Groves

What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?

The housing related support provision (TRIST) which enables advice, guidance and support to be provided to individuals who are identified as rough sleeping. The project undertakes visit to identify locations, carries out risk assessments of the individuals, provides supplies such as

tents, food parcels etc and works closely with the housing solutions team to secure temporary accommodation for these individuals.

Torfaen has seen a slight rise in rough sleeping across the borough, this is generally due to breakdown in family relationships, having the TRIST involved at an early stage often prevents the rough sleeping from being prolonged. The numbers of rough sleeper have varied from 2 – 8 individuals at any one time.

What challenges were experienced?

Torfaen has seen an increase of rough sleepers from other areas of Wales, with homelessness increasing in general across Wales more people find themselves with no other option. Through the work of TRIST and housing solutions advice and guidance is provided at the earliest opportunity to assist individuals to seek assistance from their own authority. It can be difficult to support some rough sleepers who have chosen to live this lifestyle, with these individuals’ advice and support is always available to them. Many rough sleepers have a very complex background, suffering from mental health/drug and alcohol issues, being able to identify suitable accommodation can be very difficult.

To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?

What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?

Whilst there has been a slight increase in rough sleeping, Torfaen remains one of the lowest authorities for rough sleeping. Continued development of TRIST and the increase of supported accommodation will reduce the risk of rough sleeping further. Being able to understand the complexities which come with rough sleeping has enabled a more targeted approach to these individuals. Torfaen housing related support grant has also developed further options of support such as Housing First which enable an individual to have intense support for a prolonged period of time, assisting them to source accommodation, manage their tenancy and seek the relevant support they require.



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| Objective: 3 Action: R | Improve the progress that FSM pupils make across all key stages, particularly key stage 4 by ensuring LA services compliments and supports regional provision. |
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| Reporting Officer: | Andy Rothwell |
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What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?

- Several schools in Torfaen were involved in the development of the updated teaching and learning toolkit alongside colleagues from the EAS. This is now available to all schools to support the development of teaching and learning in the LA.
- 4 schools are providing holistic support for teaching to other schools.
- 7 schools are providing professional learning support to other schools across the EAS region in a variety of curriculum areas as Learning Network Schools.
- All schools are involved in the cluster curriculum assessment and progression programme which supports developing approaches based on focus and coherence.
- 2 schools receive bespoke support to develop Teaching and Leadership
- 1 school in Estyn category compared to 4 schools in 2020/2. 1 school was removed from a category in 2022/23.
- 6 schools lead professional learning supporting teaching and leadership across the EAS
- Every school is involved in the National Professional Enquiry project focusing on one of five main themes.

- The Curriculum for Wales 'Teaching and Learning Group' enhances school's ability to network and share practice.
- The EAS have redesigned the way in which professional learning is offered to schools

What challenges were experienced?

Both LA and EAS have needed to remain sensitive and responsive to the needs of schools as they have continued to face challenges resulting from the pandemic. Evidence suggests that the pandemic has affected some groups of learners more than others:

- Vulnerable and disadvantaged learners and those with ALN
- Early years where learners risk missing key developmental milestones for language, social, emotional, physical and cognitive development
- Specific challenges for Welsh immersion learners in English speaking households, including learners transitioning from Years 6-7.

To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?

What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?

Closing the attainment gap for children coming from homes in poverty will remain a central and core objective for all schools in Torfaen. While some good progress has been made in terms of new policies and strategies we are yet to see sufficient impact in term of pupil outcomes.

Objective: 3 Work productively with partners to ensure our communities are Dementia Friendly.

Action: S

Reporting Officer: Erin Roche

What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?

Dementia Friendly Gwent

Our Dementia Friendly Gwent Network currently has over 300 members, including people living with dementia, carers, community groups and organisations. Membership continues to increase as all Dementia Friends sessions attendees are offered the opportunity to join. The group champions dementia awareness, inclusion, and support across Gwent.

We have continued to work with schools, colleges, charities, community groups and partners across Gwent, providing online and in person Dementia Friends sessions and supporting online connections with communities. 4,305 Dementia Friends have been made across 152 sessions during 2023 – 2024, to help raise awareness and understanding across the region. ABUHB have delivered Dementia Awareness sessions to all new staff as part of their induction programmes. The current total of Dementia Friends made up until 31/03/2024 is 63,230.

The Gwent Intergenerational programme of work continues to grow, with schools being supported to become Dementia Friendly recognised through a yearly action plan, as part of this work schools are encouraged to develop links to care homes, community support and hospitals to share activities and learning to improve social inclusion and reduce isolation.

This year, following changes made to the Dementia Friendly Communities initiative by the Alzheimer's Society, our network decided to develop its own logo. A design competition was created for network members and the wider community, and we had many submissions from across a number of different groups, including care homes, people living with dementia and

schools. A design team were enlisted to create a set of logos based on all the submissions that we received, resulting in 5 Dementia Friendly Gwent logos inspired by all those who had taken part. The network then voted on their favourite resulting in a completely codesigned and coproduced logo that we are extremely proud of!

Dementia Friendly Gwent Coffee Morning 2024

“It’s lovely to see all the services in Gwent we can refer to, and access!”

55 network members joined us for a Dementia Friendly Gwent coffee morning to celebrate the work of Dementia Friendly Communities across Gwent and mark Dementia Action Week 2024. This provided an opportunity for members to network, make connections and learn about various projects supporting those living with dementia and their carers.

The day consisted of a mix of presentations and interactive sessions, including Dragons Rugby Sporting Memories and Love2Move. Our opening address was provided by members of our Experts by Experience group, sharing their journey of dementia so far, what has worked well, and what they wish could have been different.

Attendees also took part in dementia friendly pledges, committing to continue our efforts as a network, to support those living with dementia, and their carers, as well as increase understanding and awareness of dementia.

To end the morning we had a special performance from the Age Connects Love to Sing choir, performing their first ever public concert!

“I really enjoyed seeing the amazing work going on in the area, also loved hearing Simon and Lisa’s story!”

All Wales Pathway of Dementia Care (Dementia Standards)

Dementia Friendly Gwent Network is supporting the Dementia Board’s work across the All-Wales Dementia Care Pathway of Standards. The network is acting as a key mechanism for community engagement and feedback to find out what dementia care and support looks like and how we can improve services across Gwent. The group are acting as ‘Community Listeners’ to enable us to gather as many stories of lived experience as possible. We also have an expert by experience group, made up of people living with dementia and their carers.

We have taken part in 100+ engagement activities (awareness sessions, community events, group visits, virtual and in person meetings) during 2024, ensuring we are reaching a number of different community groups including people living with dementia, carers, ethnic minorities, those with sensory impairment, traveller and gypsy communities, people who identify as LGBTQ+ and people with learning disabilities.

The Dementia Strategic Partnership continues to support the implementation of the ‘All-Wales Dementia Care Pathway of Standards’ and workstream leads continue to take forward work plans through the various subgroups. Significant engagement has been undertaken across all areas of Gwent to find out ‘what matters’ to people around dementia care. People living with dementia, their carers, and families play a crucial role in supporting this work, and engagement continues within our communities, to help coproduce services.

Hospital Charter

ABUHB have adopted and embedded the 'Dementia Friendly Hospital Charter' for Wales. It provides a set of principles and indicators that focus on the needs of people with dementia and their families, carers, and supporters, and offers an improvement guide to assist hospitals in their self-assessment against the dementia friendly principles. Importantly, the Charter informs people of what to expect when they receive care and visit a hospital. The following animation has been created to further raise awareness of the charter and it's aims: English <https://youtu.be/KudreUFNZ-E> / Welsh <https://youtu.be/8gu4AB5VFLM>

Feedback about people's lived experience of dementia care when they are in hospital has been used to influence, shape, and improve dementia care across our hospital wards. Our Hospital Dementia Action Plan has been significantly revised based on feedback and what matters to people.

Improving the experience of people living with dementia whilst in hospital, through providing meaningful activities and Dementia Volunteer Companions.

Further Learning and Awareness

Continuing the success of the free online training sessions that were offered during Dementia Action Week 2023, alongside Digital Communities Wales for people living with dementia, their family, friends, carers, and professionals, we have rolled out lunch and learn sessions. These take place on the first Wednesday of every month, providing an opportunity to increase dementia awareness and understanding within the community and provide people with practical knowledge to help support people to live well with dementia in the community.

Sessions included the following topics:

- Smart Speakers and Devices 3rd April (11 attended)
- Reminiscence 1st May (13 attended)
- Digital Storytelling 5th Jun (6 attended)
- Sensory Apps 7th August (7 attended)
- Inspiring Digital Activities 4th September (2 attended)
- Collecting Digital History 2nd October
- Introduction to Online Safety 6th November
- Staying in Touch 4th December

Meaningful activities

ABUHB have launched a project to deliver meaningful activities training, and activity baskets to a pilot group of care homes across Gwent. The project is entering phase 2 following initial scoping of knowledge and use of meaningful activities within the homes with people living with dementia.

Dementia Hubs

In response to citizen feedback gathered during the All-Wales Dementia Care Pathway of Standards engagement and the Gwent Population Needs Assessment (PNA), it is evident that there is a demand for enhanced support regarding information, advice, and assistance for those receiving a dementia diagnosis or experiencing cognitive issues and concerns about memory. The Dementia Strategic Partnership have supported a bid to fund 5 Dementia Hubs across Gwent (1 per LA).

The Dementia Hubs aim to provide support, good quality information, advice and assistance, to anyone concerned about memory-related issues or those affected by dementia. The hubs will be developed in community venues, in accessible locations which are in the heart of the community, so people can just pop in, to get the information they need and will be developed and aligned to the All-Wales Dementia Care Pathway of Standards. Collaborating with community partners to provide this service will help support people in the community to access information and enable signposting to resources on brain health, keeping well, early intervention support and longer-term support information, from a range of organisations and professionals. In addition to signposting, the hubs will host partners from across different groups and organisations on a rota system to provide the opportunity to talk 'face to face'. The hubs will also offer a private area/room for confidential conversations (where possible) and the offer of training (depending on venue size) to include basic understanding and awareness sessions and also link to partner training offers e.g. MECS team, PCCT and Bitesize sessions.

The Dementia Hubs will provide vital support and information to enable people to access information, assistance and advice based on their needs. In addition to the IAA, signposting, and key contact days with partners the hubs will provide:

- A safe place for people who are concerned about their memory or are affected by dementia to drop in and get the information they need. On days where we have leads manning the venue there will be an opportunity to talk to a dementia/carer lead, in person.
- Offer a warm welcoming environment, tea and coffee will be available for anyone visiting the hub on the days it is manned.
- Training to deliver the Ws5a suite of L&D options e.g. Dementia Friends, Dementia Awareness, Experiential Training
- A private session bookable room to be used for expert advice appointments, e.g. financial information, power of attorney, support with forms etc.
- Assistive Technology (AT): Where space permits, we want to give people the opportunity to view and try AT that could help improve their lives and enable them to live more independently.

Assistive Technology:

HUG by LAUGH® is a sensory device designed to bring people pleasure and comfort. The device has been designed by Cardiff Metropolitan University specifically for people living with dementia but can be used by people with various conditions. In Gwent, HUG is being piloted in a range of different settings to test effectiveness. It has weighted arms and legs along with an optional beating heart within its soft body. It can play personalised music that can be changed to a favourite playlist. The HUG "magic box" which provides the heartbeat and music runs from a rechargeable unit which is removed when washing.

The Gwent RPB has to date provided funding for 500 devices, which has benefited people living with dementia, autism, and ND conditions, learning disabilities, mental health conditions, carers and people receiving end-of-life care. It has been a real partnership effort, and we have been proud to support the distribution of a product developed here in Wales which is making a real difference to people across our Gwent communities.

Reminiscence Interactive Therapy Activities (RITA) developed by My Improvement Network, enhances care for older individuals, including those with dementia and mental health conditions. Using a touchscreen device, RITA offers meaningful activities that combine entertainment with therapy, helping patients with memory impairments recall and share past

events through music, news, speeches, games, karaoke, and films. Over 260 RITA devices were purchased with Gwent RPB funding between 2020-2022. These devices have been distributed in partnership with ABUHB, local authorities, and third-sector organisations across Gwent, including care homes, hospitals, community venues, and third-sector projects. RITA is also used by mobile teams and has been trialled in complex care settings.

The Happiness Programme, created by Social Ability, combines interactive sensory light technology with a structured programme, training, and support. Designed for individuals with cognitive and physical care needs, the Happiness Programme provides meaningful and engaging activities through more than 80 interactive options including a variety of interactive games, quizzes, and mindful immersive content.

In 2021/2022, 147 Happiness Programme devices were funded by the Gwent RPB for 2 years. The devices have been distributed across all sectors in the region with organisations reporting positive results. Feedback from organisations using the Happiness Programme indicates a positive impact on both the supported individuals and the staff.

What challenges were experienced?

There have been many challenges during 2023/2024 with a number of changes taking place within the Alzheimer's Society, with the Dementia Champion role changing to the Dementia Ambassador model as in England. This has affected both Dementia Friends, and the 'Working towards become Dementia Friendly' accreditation process for Dementia Friendly Schools/Organisations. We have worked alongside Alzheimer's Society and communities to ensure that changes have been implemented smoothly, providing opportunities for partners and community members to discuss the changes and raise queries and concerns via Gwent Dementia Friendly Community meetings. Changes regarding the Dementia Champion to Dementia Ambassador role have resulted in a reduction in Ambassador numbers within Gwent and we are working hard to link with previous Champions, to onboard them as Ambassadors, as well as increase overall numbers across the region. We are collecting a waiting list of partners wishing to become Dementia Ambassadors ready for when the Alzheimer's Society release new training programme dates.

The Alzheimer's Society 'Working towards become Dementia Friendly' accreditation process for Dementia Friendly Schools/Organisations will cease as of the end of 2023. We are working with the Alzheimer's Society, the Gwent Dementia Friendly Community network, and the wider communities to understand what these changes will mean for Gwent and developing a legacy programme to continue this work.

There have been challenges in obtaining to funding for the Dementia Hub model, with our original goal to implement 2 hubs per LA providing increased access to the offer across the boroughs. With the now successful bid to implement 1 hub per LA, the initial 6-month period will be used as a pilot, gathering data and experiences from community members who use the hubs to develop a further bid to expand the hubs across the region, or potentially 'man' the hubs Mon – Fri for 1:1 support to those who visit.

To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?

What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?

We will continue to support our communities and are currently mapping out the support available across Gwent as part of The All-Wales Dementia Care Pathway of Standards work, so we can see where there are gaps in support provision.

We will continue to work with Dementia Strategic Partnership leads, to ensure Dementia Friendly Communities in Gwent plays a key part in current and future work.

With the Alzheimer’s Society ‘Working towards become Dementia Friendly’ accreditation ceasing at the end of 2023, as of 2024 a ‘Dementia Friendly Gwent’ (DFC) accreditation process has been developed for organisations and schools to continue the work of DFCs across the region and provide an opportunity for us to engage with and recognise the fantastic work that goes on within the community.

With the changing landscape of the Dementia Ambassador and Dementia Friends model within the Alzheimer’s Society we have agreed to move forward in collaboration with Dementia Friendly Swansea/Swansea Dementia Hwb rolling out a bespoke Dementia Aware + package for Gwent through a train the trainer model. This will allow us to resolve the capacity issues we have experiences with the Dementia Ambassador availability across the region. This will commence as of 2025. Dementia Friends will still be part of our awareness raising offer with a view to provide regular quarterly virtual sessions, and Dementia Friends for primary school ages.

The Gwent Population Needs Assessment (PNA) has highlighted the care and support needs of people living with dementia, their families, and carers. The Area Plan was developed to reflect the actions we will take to meet these needs and help improve the lives of those affected by dementia. The Area Plan forms the regional work programme for dementia across Gwent and this is monitored on a regular basis, to ensure we are progressing this work.

We will continue to implement and monitor the value of the Dementia Hub models to inform the service offer and next steps for 2024 and beyond.



| | |
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| Objective: 3 | Work to support various individuals and groups with disabilities i.e., Motor Neurons Disease. |
| Action: T | |

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|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Reporting Officer: | Stuart Lawrence |
|---------------------------|-----------------|

What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?

Working with community groups such as Able, Evolve and Torfaen Access Forum it was identified that the disability community feels left behind as a result of covid and have struggled to reengage with physical activities since. Adapted cycling/biking was identified as an outside opportunity that gave confidence to those who still struggle in an inside environment. Torfaen Sport Development ran a pilot scheme at Cwmbran Stadium for 12 weeks over the summer to see if the demand was real and this confirmed it is, with 20 people attending. One lady stated she had never ridden a bike before.

We continue to work with the NHS to identify appropriate sessions for referred patients into community activity.

What challenges were experienced?

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| <p>Staffing it is a consistent issue due to the amount of sessions running at the same time and the specialised training needed to run the session. We have trained up staff from social services, Evolve and Able to run their closed sessions but we want to open it up to the community.</p> <p>We are now working with the leisure trust and the above mentioned groups to formalise an affordable community biking programme for people with a disability to access biking sessions. This will be a constituted group, allowing the group to apply for funding to grow the sessions.</p> <p>Capacity continues to be the issue at times. We have times where we have an influx of referrals and trying to work with individuals to get them into activity is sometimes slow due to the engagement needed to get them involved and sometimes home visits have been needed.</p> |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> |
| <p>We are continuing to work with in this area despite no funding from Disability Sport Wales. Everything that we do with in Sport is about inclusivity and we will continue to ensure that there are no barriers in place for people to become active.</p> <p>The biggest barrier for us is resource with no specific Disability Sport Wales Officer now, we are continuing in partnership with ABUHB with a Health Pathway and as this develops there should be greater capacity and signposting for those targeted individuals.</p> |

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| <p>Objective 4 <i>Involve people and communities in matters that are important to them and the decisions that we make</i></p> | |
| Objective: 4 | Ensure that all consultations are communicated as widely as possible. |
| Action: A | |
| Reporting Officer: | Louise Day |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| <p>The number of people registered on the Get Involved Torfaen website has continued to increase - in Q2 2024 more than 800 people were registered.</p> <p>Our engagement lead officer regularly issues newsletters to registered participants notifying them of new consultations and those due to close. She has also developed a new social media strategy, which has contributed to an increase in the number of people visiting the consultation pages.</p> <p>All face-to-face engagement sessions are promoted on the Get Involved Torfaen platform, social media and the Torfaen Council website.</p> <p>We publish press releases and a weekly news bulletin about all consultations to local media.</p> <p>The corporate engagement team has held two Torfaen People’s Panel face-to-face meetings, and our engagement lead officer works closely with the Over 50 forums and the Torfaen Access Forum.</p> | |

The council's community newsletter Torfaen Talks includes a page dedicated to public engagement events and opportunities, aimed at residents who do not follow us online.

We liaise with key stakeholders and partners including community councils to help promote relevant consultations.

Consultation on the Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-2028 was conducted and received a good spread of responses, suggesting that we are able to reach most demographics when a concerted effort to is made.

What challenges were experienced?

Measuring the impact of non-digital communications regarding consultations is a challenge.

To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?

What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?

The relaunch of Torfaen Talks has had an excellent response from older residents. Members of the 50+ Forum have told our Age Friendly Communities Officer how much they enjoy and appreciate it.

Supporting council teams to run hybrid consultations (i.e. online and in person) means we reach more demographics. A new Participatory Group is to be set up to provide advice and guidance to staff involved in engagement and consultation.



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| Objective: 4 | Carry out a mapping exercise of the make-up of groups that share a specific protected characteristic. E.g., Older people, LGBT people. |
| Action: B | |

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| Reporting Officer: | Steven Honeywill |
|---------------------------|------------------|

What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?

This action was undertaken ahead of developing the Public Services Board's Well-being Plan for Gwent, which received input at the consultation stage from many demographics. This year we continued to make some progress in building relationships and opportunities on a Gwent level, most notably with the LGBTQ+ Community, by attending Pride in the Port and Caerphilly Pride as part of the Proud Councils network and supporting Club F.O.D in planning of Torfaen Pride, the borough's first Pride event.

What challenges were experienced?

As with any kind of mapping, contact information goes out of date and with no assigned resource to maintain a database, there are several groups talking about doing their own mapping which amounts to inefficiency and duplication of effort. We have therefore discussed at officer level bringing these groups together via one regional strategic engagement group for Gwent, merging the PSB and RPB Engagement and Communications groups and bringing other appropriate group representation into that arena. This will result in a more effective way of working and better management of public services' ask of residents within Gwent when it comes to consultation, whilst making it easier for staff to connect with those likely to be affected most by their decisions and improving the quality of Impact Assessments.

To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?

What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?

| | |
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| <p>Working with the LGBTQ+ community will allow TCBC to produce Transitioning at Work Guidance that is informed by those with lived experience during 2025-26.</p> <p>We will utilise the new Participatory Group within TCBC to strengthen our internal communication and to support staff in reaching relevant groups linked to all Protected Characteristics, as well as those in poverty, carers and care experienced individuals.</p> | |
| | |
| <p>Objective: 4 Action: D</p> | <p>Ensure young people have the opportunity to have a say on issues that affect them (Article 12 UNCRC).</p> |
| <p>Reporting Officer:</p> | <p>Philip Wilson</p> |
| <p>What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?</p> | |
| <p>We planned the first Young People’s Take Over Day to be held in May 2024. Fourteen secondary school pupils would go on to spend the day in the Civic Centre to “take over” the roles of Chief Executive and other senior leadership positions for the day. They made a series of recommendations and are due to return to the council offices in December to be updated on the progress that has been made by officers.</p> <p>The Torfaen Youth Forum was relaunched in February 2024 and since then it has had a steady membership of 17 young people with representation from each of the county’s secondary schools. Issues that the forum are currently working on include, how to tackle vaping in schools, cost of school meals, dyslexia awareness, community outdoor spaces for young people and part-time work for 16-year-olds.</p> <p>In November, the first Youth Alliance meeting will be held at Crownbridge School. The aim of the alliance is to bring together representatives from a broad range of young people’s organisations including schools, forums and outreach programmes. A second follow up meeting will be held early in 2025.</p> <p>Our children and young people’s participation officer is also in discussion with primary school headteachers about setting up a junior youth forum to give younger people the same opportunity to have their voices heard.</p> | |
| <p>What challenges were experienced?</p> | |
| <p>School staff are busy with lots of competing demands on their time, it can be difficult to build initial relationships with schools.</p> | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> | |
| <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |
| <p>Covid 19 did have an impact on the youth forum leading to a drop in numbers, but since January 2024 good progress has resumed with young people taking an active role in ensuring their voices are listened to and taken seriously. It is important that teams have a commitment to encouraging staff to support opportunities for young people to have their say.</p> | |
| | |
| <p>Objective: 4 Action: E</p> | <p>Encourage services working with children and young people to adopt the National Participation Standards for Children and Young People in Wales.</p> |
| <p>Reporting Officer:</p> | <p>Philip Wilson</p> |
| <p>What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?</p> | |

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| <p>A new Children and Young People’s Participation Strategy has been written and this outlines key themes for adopting the National Participation Standards.</p> <p>The strategy is due to be considered by cabinet members in December.</p> <p>The strategy offers a framework to ensure services offered to young people reach national participation standards. A training programme based around this strategy will be delivered to council departments.</p> <p>A staff participation group was set up in September to improve how public engagement exercises and consultations are planned and executed with a view to increasing involvement from under-represented audiences, including young people.</p> | |
| <p>What challenges were experienced?</p> | |
| <p>It can be difficult to get a consistent message out to each of the council departments that work alongside children and young people.</p> | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> | |
| <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |
| <p>Good progress is being made with staff having a commitment to working in ways that support participation standards.</p> | |
| | |
| <p>Objective: 4</p> | <p>Increase engagement of seldom heard young people in local authority and partnership consultations to improve our understanding of their needs and values.</p> |
| <p>Action: F</p> | |
| <p>Reporting Officer:</p> | <p>Philip Wilson</p> |
| <p>What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?</p> | |
| <p>The council has a number of groups to support children with specific needs including Torfaen Young People’s Support Service, Young Carers, the Gypsy Traveller Forum and an LGBTQ+ group run by the youth service,</p> <p>A steering group of professionals that work with young people whose voices are seldom heard has been established. The steering group is working to set up a Torfaen Youth Alliance that will bring together young people from harder to reach communities within the county. Having an opportunity to consult with these young people will increase understanding of their needs/values and ensuring that their voices are heard.</p> <p>The alliance and the youth forum will be able to have their say on council consultations as well as raise other issues they think are important.</p> | |
| <p>What challenges were experienced?</p> | |
| <p>It can be difficult for staff to encourage young people to engage in forums and meetings</p> | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> | |
| <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |
| <p>A good start has been made through the establishment of the steering group. There is a good pool of professionals that are dedicated and keen to look at ways to encourage young people to have their voices heard and be taken seriously.</p> | |

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| Objective: 4 Action: G | Develop the Youth Parliament for Torfaen. |
| Reporting Officer: | Philip Wilson |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| <p>The Youth Parliament is called the Torfaen Youth Alliance, which held its first meeting in November 2024.</p> <p>The Youth Forum has also contributed to a discussion about the future of the UK Youth Parliament. Several members also stood for the Senedd's youth parliament election in November.</p> | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| It can be difficult for staff to encourage young people to engage in forums and meetings | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
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| Objective: 4 Action: H | Implement the Children's Right's Impact Assessment tool. |
| Reporting Officer: | Philip Wilson |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| <p>All of education services have utilised the children's rights assessment tool and written objectives into the departmental plans which reflect outcomes from this self-assessment. Use of this tool will allow a way for monitoring what progress is being made to embed a children's human rights approach into day-to-day ways of working.</p> | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| Education services were able to easily adopt using the self-assessment tool into their work plans. This could be more difficult when the tool is rolled out to other council departments. | |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? | |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? | |
| <p>Good progress has been made in education services using the assessment tool. It is thought more training will be required to enable other departments to use the tool to develop their departmental plans. This is due to their day-to-day work not generally having a focus on recognising children and young people's views and opinions.</p> | |
| | |
| Objective: 4 Action: I | Develop further opportunities for involvement in decision making. |
| Reporting Officer: | Philip Wilson |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| Development of a Torfaen Youth Alliance and Junior Youth Forum will further increase opportunities for children and young people to have an influence on decision making. There | |

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| are also opportunities for young people to engage in the Rebel Torfaen project, where their views and opinions will be consulted as part of the larger Rebel Torfaen workstreams. |
| What challenges were experienced? |
| External agencies and internal departments can see youth forums as easy groups to use as part of a consultation process. This can lead to engagement with children being tokenistic and not following national participation standards. |
| To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan? |
| What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028? |
| Education services have established several avenues for young people to be involved in decision making. The challenge in 2024-2028 will be to embed good practice into all council departments to ensure that participation is led by children and young people's needs and opinions. |

| Objective 5 | |
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| <i>Ensure the council complies with its statutory equality and Welsh language duties</i> | |
| Objective: 5 Action: A | Publish annual reports on time, after due internal consideration and scrutiny. |
| Reporting Officer: | Steven Honeywill |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| This action has been completed every year. | |
| | |
| Objective: 5 Action: B | Embed the Socio-economic Duty into the Well-Being Impact Assessments. |
| Reporting Officer: | Steven Honeywill |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| This action was completed during 2020/21, when the Socio-economic Duty was added into our Integrated Impact Assessment tool. | |
| | |
| Objective: 5 Action: C | Ensure that sufficient consideration is consistently given to equalities aspects within Well-Being Impact Assessments. |
| Reporting Officer: | Steven Honeywill |
| What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24? | |
| Integrated Impact Assessments have been reviewed whenever requested ahead of Council and Cabinet decisions. | |
| What challenges were experienced? | |
| It would be useful to be involved at an earlier stage in the process in order to offer advice and we aim to achieve this more frequently via the new internal Participatory Group. | |

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| <p>Staff, understandably, don't always have sufficient understanding of certain disabilities, neurodiversity traits or other lived experiences due to shared characteristics. The learning need is significant but connecting staff to groups such as Torfaen Access Forum and 50+ Forums is a useful way to help them consider a range of perspectives.</p> <p>There are various challenges that limit staff's ability to engage or co-produce solutions, such as capacity, short deadlines for funding applications etc, so we are constantly looking for ways to make this process easier and to ensure meaningful and thorough consideration is given.</p> | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |
| <p>More resources are required to support staff to consider the full breadth of disabilities and work within the Social Model of Disability.</p> | |
| | |
| <p>Objective: 5 Action: D</p> | <p>Equalities team to advise on practices and clauses (including their evaluation) that advance equality that can be incorporated into procurement exercises and also monitor their compliance in conjunction with the relevant service managers managing the ongoing contracts following a procurement exercise.</p> |
| <p>Reporting Officer:</p> | <p>Steven Honeywill</p> |
| <p>What progress has been made for this action in 2023/24?</p> | |
| <p>No requests for support or advice received</p> | |
| <p>What challenges were experienced?</p> | |
| <p>N/A</p> | |
| <p>To what extent are you content with progress against this action over the lifetime of this Strategic Equality Plan?</p> <p>What have you learnt that will influence future efforts or feed into the SEP for 2024-2028?</p> | |
| | |
| <p>Objective: 5 Action: E</p> | <p>Assess the number of complaints that contain an Equalities or Welsh Language element.</p> |
| <p>Reporting Officer:</p> | <p>Steven Honeywill / Alan Vernon-Jones</p> |
| <p>Complaints received in 2023/24</p> | |
| <p><u>Equalities related:</u></p> <p>Complaints handled at stages 1 and 2 of the Corporate and Social Care Complaints processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A complainant felt they had been treated differently when Planning enforcement issues were considered, due to race. A review of the cases for both the complainant and neighbours showed that outcomes were based on the situation and not individuals. Not upheld. • A draft registration certificate contained a spelling error not identified by the residents. A charge therefore applied for amendment. It was explained that one party had dyslexia. This | |

had not been disclosed at the time, but the department sought to waive the fee in this case. Part upheld.

Welsh Language related:

There was 1 complaint received directly by the Council:

- Complaint from a member of the public on the 09/02/2024
Lack of Welsh play provision. The complaint was not upheld.

There were 5 investigations carried out by the Welsh Language Commissioner

- CS1130 - (ongoing from 2022/2023) - Complaint from a member of the public on 27/03/2023
English only cycle path sign located on the junction of Ty Coch Way and Hollybush Way in Cwmbran. The Commissioner did not conduct a full investigation.

- CS1145 - Complaint from a member of the public on 25/04/2023
Council Twitter account not in Welsh and temporary traffic signs in Pontnewydd, Cwmbran

- CS1163 - Complaint from a member of the public on 12/06/2023
Street signs that used to be bilingual have changed to be in English only / road traffic signs in English only. The Commissioner did not conduct a full investigation.

- CS1061 - Complaint from a member of the public on 28/09/2022
This complaint refers to a complaint raised in September 2022, but was not investigated and referred to the Welsh Language Tribunal for determination. The case was re-opened in June 2023. The complaint relates to street name plates and Welsh language consideration when making Council decisions, The Investigation is on-going.

- CS1149 - Complaint raised by the Welsh Language Commissioner on 25/11/2023.
Four telephone calls made as part of the Commissioner's mystery shopper exercise were unanswered. This investigation is ongoing.

- CS1216 - Complaint from a member of the public on 27/11/2023
No reply sent to a request for Council Tax information in Welsh. The Commissioner did not conduct a full investigation

Additional Information

The Council made an amendment in relation to one of its corporate well-being objectives in the County Plan to reflect the amendment of the Prosperous Wales well-being goal to include mention of 'fair work'. This is detailed in the Council's annual self-assessment and well-being report for 2023/24, as follows:

Although it was the intention to keep the Council's Well-being Objectives the same throughout the duration of the County Plan, a change to the definition of one of the national well-being goals has required us to review our own Well-being Objectives. The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 changed the definition of the national well-being goal, 'A Prosperous Wales' therefore requiring us to review our own objectives and to consult with the Council's representative trade unions. The new definition of a prosperous Wales is, 'An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing fair work'. The new definition includes the word 'fair' replacing the previous definition of 'decent'. In responding to this change a new definition of Well-Being objective 6 has been defined as, Well-Being Objective 6 - 'We will make Torfaen a great place to do business delivering fair work for all by working with local employers & trade unions, encouraging new business start-ups and entrepreneurial activities'.

Appendix A.

Workforce Data - Employee Equality Monitoring Data

This data is based on employees in post on 31st March 2024.

It should be noted that some of the data with a number fewer than 5 has been removed to ensure that no one individual is disclosed and anonymity maintained

Torfaen County Borough Council

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Workforce Data held on TCBC staff in post 31.03.2024

On 31st March 2024, Torfaen County Borough Council employed 4052 people.

The table below shows the number and percentage of people within the organisation on this date who had disclosed personal data for each of the protected characteristics listed below:

| Protected Characteristic | Number of staff who had provided this information | Percentage of staff who had provided this information |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Age | 4052 | 100% |
| Gender | 4052 | 100% |
| Ethnicity | 3795 | 93.66% |
| Marital Status | 3697 | 91.2% |
| Sexual Orientation | 1595 | 39.36% |
| Religion or Belief | 1237 | 30.53% |
| Disability | 1134 | 27.99% |

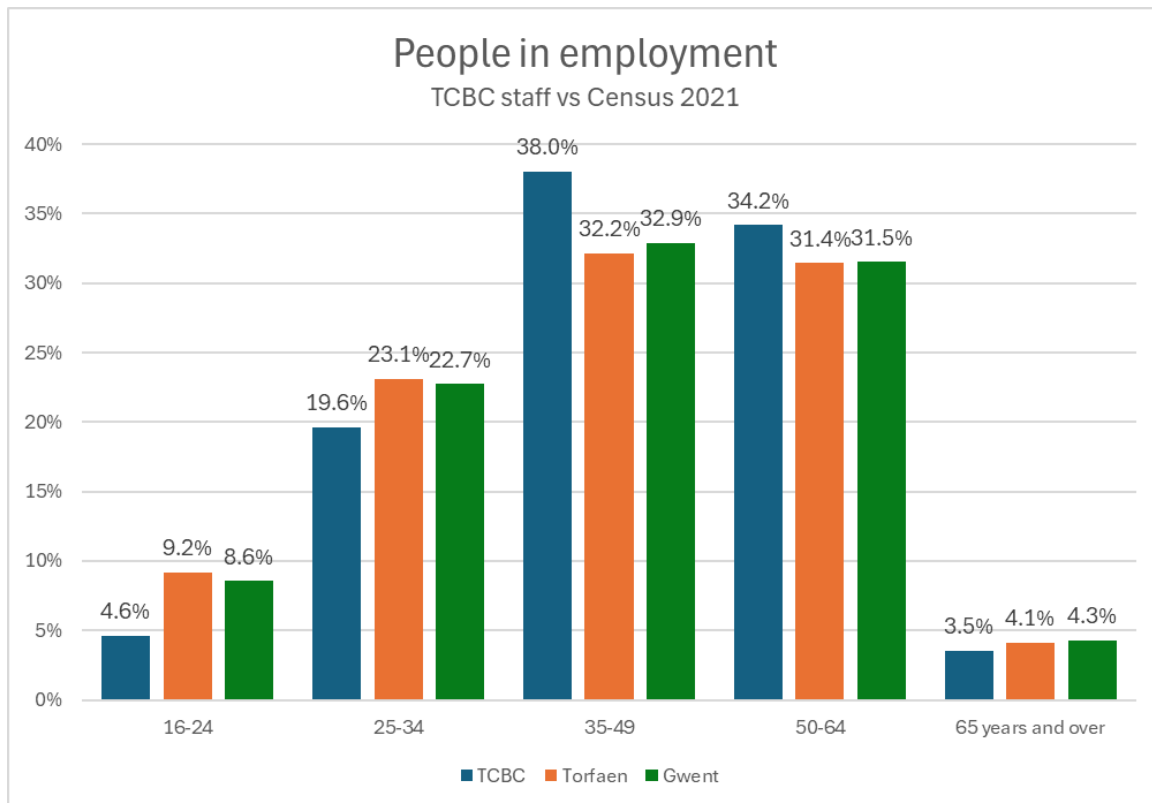
It should be noted that whilst we can encourage disclosure, an authority cannot require any employee or applicant to provide any information in relation to their protected characteristics.

Age Data

The table below shows the number of people employed by Torfaen County Borough Council on 31st March 2024, grouped to match Census age groupings:

| Age | 16-24 | 25-34 | 35-49 | 50-64 | 65 and over |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|
| Number of employees | 188 | 795 | 1541 | 1385 | 143 |

The graph below shows these figures as a percentage of the workforce, with comparison to the overall employment picture in Torfaen and Gwent:



We can see, for example, that 9.2% of people in employment in Torfaen are aged 16-24 years and that 4.6% of Torfaen CBC employees are aged 16-24 years.

Gender Data

The table below shows the number of female and male staff within each of the five service areas:

| | Female | Male | Total |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Adults and Communities | 439 | 139 | 578 |
| Children and Family Services | 2087 | 430 | 2517 |
| Economy and Environment | 80 | 291 | 371 |
| Resources Directorate | 278 | 77 | 355 |
| Shared Resource Service | 54 | 176 | 230 |
| Totals | 2938 | 1113 | 4051 |

Note: the total falls 1 short of the overall total of 4052 employees as the Chief Executive role falls outside of a specific service area.

Ethnicity Data

Since 1991, the census for England and Wales has included a question about ethnic group. The ethnic group question has two stages. Firstly, a person identifies through one of the following five high-level ethnic groups:

- Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh
- Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups
- White
- Other ethnic groups

Torfaen CBC's workforce data category options on monitoring forms allow us to group respondents into these five high-level ethnic groups. The table below shows how the 93.66% of staff who provided their ethnicity data responded and how this relates to the population of Torfaen:

| High-level Ethnic Group | Percentage of Torfaen's population in 2011 (Source: ONS Census data) | Percentage of Torfaen's population in 2021 (Source: ONS Census data) | Percentage of Torfaen CBC's workforce* (Source: Ifor data held by TCBC) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh | 1.1% | 1.3% | 0.61% |
| Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African | 0.2% | 0.2% | 0.32% |
| Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups | 0.7% | 1.1% | 0.55% |
| White | 98% | 97.1% | 98.52% |
| Other ethnic groups | 0.1% | 0.3% | 0% |

257 members of staff have not provided data on their ethnicity (6.34% of workforce).

Marital Status

Employee responses sorted from most to least:

| | |
|----------------------|------|
| Married | 1865 |
| Single | 1212 |
| No response | 343 |
| Partner | 271 |
| Divorced | 229 |
| Separated | 85 |
| Widowed | 28 |
| Preferred not to say | 12 |
| Civil partnership | 7 |

Between 2011 and 2021, changes were made to the census question or options that people could choose from or how write-in answers are classified. Response options for TCBC employees are not directly comparable.

Sexual Orientation

Data on sexual orientation has been provided by 1595 TCBC staff, equivalent to 39% of the workforce.

66 people (1.6% of the workforce) identified within LGBTQ+ groups

Religion or Belief

Data on religion or belief was provided by 1237 TCBC staff, equivalent to 31% of the workforce.

Religion or belief sorted from most to least:

| | |
|----------------------------|------|
| No response | 2679 |
| Atheist | 300 |
| Christian - Protestant | 201 |
| Christian - Orthodox | 195 |
| Christian | 169 |
| Preferred not to say | 136 |
| Agnostic | 123 |
| None | 89 |
| Christian – Roman Catholic | 83 |
| Other | 66 |
| Buddhist - Hinayana | <5 |
| Hinduism | <5 |
| Buddhist - Mahayana | <5 |
| Islam - Sunni | <5 |
| Judaism - Reformed | <5 |
| Sikhism | <5 |

Note: <5 indicates a number between 1 and 5

Disability

Data on disability was provided by 1134 TCBC staff, equivalent to 28% of the workforce.

65 people (1.6% of the workforce) identified as having a disability.