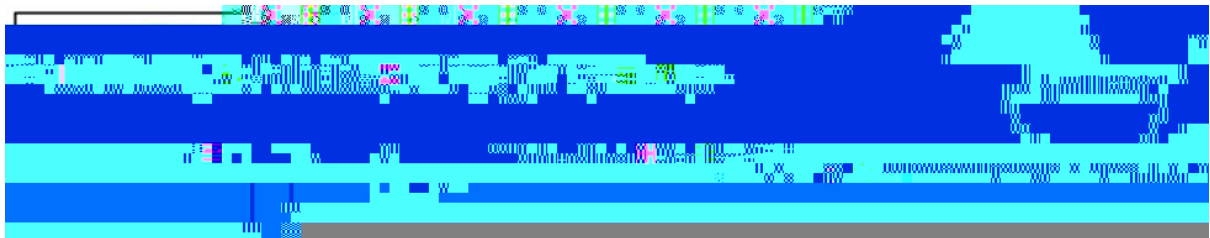


This document is available electronically at: [Equality in Blaenau Gwent](#)

A version of this document is also available in Easy Read and in hard copies at each of Blaenau Gwent's local libraries.

If you require this document in a different format, e.g. large print, Braille, audio version, etc. please contact:



Under the Equalities Act 2010, the Council has a statutory duty to prepare and publish a Strategic Equality Plan with equality objectives every four years. The plan must show due regard to how the Council can contribute to a fairer society by advancing equality and good relations in our day-to-day activities.

The Equality Act (Wales) 2010 legally protects people from discrimination, victimisation, and harassment if they share one or more of the following protected characteristics.

giving birth and includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

- - This refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.
- (including non-belief) - Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
- - A man or a woman.
- - Being heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

This is the Council's fourth Strategic Equality Plan and will set out our commitments for meeting its statutory aims to:

- (1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- (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.

To create a Strategic Equality Plan that is relevant to those living and working with

- Older People
- Young Carers Support Groups
- Representatives from minority ethnic groups
- Individuals with a Disability

Furthermore, we have had forty-eight individuals participate via an online questionnaire, to encourage people to share their views and experiences, and talk to us broadly about equality, diversity, and inclusion.

We gathered and analysed the results of the consultation and used them to create our proposed objectives in the Consultation Document. We asked the public again if we had reflected their feedback in the proposed objectives through a second survey. We also

We feel our themed approach will help us to tackle relevant issues, and therefore we are sure that the steps we want to take to deliver the objectives

: We will be a fair and equitable organisation.

We will be a workplace that champions diversity and inclusion.

: We will create a fair and inclusive learning culture for all children and young people with a

We recognise that everyone is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. The ability to live and work without prejudice is a fundamental right, regardless of people's background, identity, and experiences.

Equality is not only a legal obligation, but also a moral and social responsibility. To be a fair and equitable organisation requires effective political and professional leadership that promotes a culture of respect, accountability, and collaboration across the organisation.

One of the ways we demonstrate our commitment to equality is by fulfilling our role as a corporate parent for children and young people who are looked after or have left care.

As an organisation we are committed to delivering the equality duties placed on us as a public body and understand the need to ensure that our policies, practices, and services are fair, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse needs and aspirations of our communities and workforce.

People have told us that they recognise the importance of equality and diversity within the organisation, but also highlight some of the challenges and areas for improvement. They suggest that people want to see more action and commitment from the leadership and management, as well as more opportunities for collaboration and learning across different groups and teams.

Some of the key themes and messages that people have told us about Objective 1 include:



- Implemented the Blaenau Gwent Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2023/24.
- Demonstrate a strong commitment and desire to lead anti-discriminatory values and behaviours throughout the organisation.
- Commit to integrating key expectations from national strategies and plans into our approach for equality, diversity, and inclusion e.g. Anti-Racist Wales Act on Plan and LGBTQ+ Act on Plan for Wales.
- Strengthen our plans, policies, and procedures in relation to

opportunities to develop their skills and talents, and to contribute to our vision and mission. We want to remove any barriers that prevent people from accessing and benefiting from our services, and to address any issues of discrimination, harassment, or bullying. We want to be a role model for other organisations and sectors, and to influence positive change in our communities and beyond.

We want to demonstrate that by being a good corporate parent, we not only fulfil our statutory obligations, but also contribute to the wider equality agenda. We will strive to promote the rights and interests of a vulnerable and often marginalised group of people, and ensure they are treated with respect, dignity, and fairness.

As the largest employer in the area, we recognise the importance for staff to feel valued and safe in the workplace. We understand the need to cultivate an inclusive and diverse workplace that enables individuals and teams to thrive and create optimum levels of job satisfaction.

We aim to foster a culture of inclusion that celebrates diversity and promotes belonging, collaboration, and innovation. We aspire to be an employer of choice that attracts and retains diverse talent from all backgrounds and identities.

It is essential that we provide staff at all levels with appropriate up-to-date guidance, training, and support on key issues such as Anti-Racism, LGBTQ+, Disability, Gender, and Age.

Feedback from the survey showed us that the people are keen to see more diversity and representation in the organisation and that staff are eager to learn and change. Staff have stated that they are looking for more clarity on the organisational structure and how it supports diversity and inclusion.

Positive attitudes towards equality and diversity

: Blaenau Gwent Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Survey 2023

Staff members as part of SEP engagement conversation 2023

- Development and implementation of our Organisational Workforce Strategy.

- Create an inclusive staffing culture where equality, diversity and inclusion are recognised, valued, and celebrated.
- Increase understanding on Positive Action as defined in the Equality Act 2010 and understand how to embed it in our staff's work.
- Meet our legal requirement to publish gender pay data and consider report on disability and ethnicity pay gaps.
- Ensure equality of opportunity when recruiting staff.
- Seek to identify levels of minority ethnic diversity using Organisational Development data and use this as a benchmark to explore any structures and cultural barriers.
- Monitor equality in our staff promotions, training, and discipline and grievance policies and procedures.
- Implement and review the equality, diversity and inclusion training opportunities using the new training portal 'Thinqi' with a specific focus on key issues such as Anti-Racism, LGBTQ+, Disability, Gender and Age.
- On-going provision of support services to our staff for issues associated to equality, diversity, and inclusion e.g. Counselling support, Menopause cafes and Health related issues.
- Ensure staff that work directly with people with protected characteristics are sufficiently trained and able to respond appropriately to equality issues.
- Aim to increase levels of self-identification from our staff on all protected characteristics and increase confidence in sharing data.
- Commit to collecting and using the 'lived experiences' of our workforce.

We want our staff to reflect the diversity of the communities we serve by providing equal opportunities for career development and progression for all staff, regardless of their protected characteristics or personal circumstances. We want to encourage staff to share their experiences for us to inform our policies and practices and improve our workplace environment.

We want to promote awareness and understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation and challenge any forms of discrimination, harassment, or bullying.

- Development of a regional approach to tackling racism in schools.
 - Recruitment of a Minority Ethnic worker through the Families First programme.
 - Children's Grand Council – equality focused workshops to understand the equality issues that children and young people face.
 - Collaborative and partnership working with schools to develop School Equality Plans.
 - Youth forum priorities that reflect the voices of children and young people in relation to equality, including, Show Racism the Red Card, International Women's Day etc.
-
- Improve equality data and performance monitoring arrangements with schools.
 - Deliver the tackling racism in schools' act on plan developed as part of the regional approach.
 - Support a range of appropriate interventions to be made available to schools to meet the wellbeing needs of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds.
 - Strengthen reporting on equality, diversity, and inclusion issues within schools.
 - Work with Education establishment to increase representation from minority ethnic groups on the Youth Forum.
 - Working with schools to embed and deliver school equality plans.
 - Consider equality focused peer support network for school's staff.
 - Support School Governors to appoint anti-racism leads.

To ensure cohesive communities within Blaenau Gwent, all individuals living and working in the area must feel included and safe, a notion that echoed within our continued commitment to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. Working in partnership we will aim to support the National Goals set out within the Act of creating '... and '... . These goals will be incorporated within the programmes and initiatives that we deliver that increase awareness and understanding of matters surrounding equalities to celebrate and bring together communities.

To deliver on the objective to promote and support inclusive, safe and cohesive communities, it is imperative that we consider the protected characteristics when delivering services that educate and support vulnerable individuals within the community. Ensuring that our Community Safety Team are well-informed on all plans, strategies, and actions and support

- Continue to work in partnership with a wide range of public, third sector and private sector organisations, to deliver a holistic package of support for those requiring resettlement.
- Learn from the experiences of people seeking sanctuary in Blaenau Gwent.
- Continue our support of the LGBTQ+ Community and give consideration to hosting Pride events.
- Raise awareness of what a hate crime is and ensure the public know how and where to report hate crime.

We want to be able to take pride in our communities knowing that its members feel safe and included.

We aim to see an increased awareness among our communities surrounding the protected characteristics, in turn reducing incidents that jeopardize the feeling of safety for all individuals within our area. Furthermore, we aim to continuously improve our collaborative working between our equalities officer and champions and the community safety and cohesion teams to monitor public ongoing matters relating to matters of equality. We want it to be clear to the public that their safety and inclusion are priorities for the Council and ensure individuals are aware of the resources available to them to seek guidance surrounding the support and development of more cohesive communities.

Our vision is to be a community that sees the value in equality and exemplified by the consideration of those most vulnerable in the Council's decision making and service delivery.

Youth Clubs running weekly activities including Zumba, Yoga, Cookery, Art, Storytelling, and DJ'ing.

Young Carers trips, events and festival

18-25 Disability Arts Club

Spoken Word (maternal mental health) Project

World Book Day Celebration – making resources available to all.

- Implementation of the Engagement and Participation Strategy.

-

We want to see an increase in public engagement, particularly in terms of engaging the views of areas within the community that we are currently seeing low levels of participation. A protected characteristic that we acknowledge needs addressing is that of young people. The National Survey for Wales noted that Blaenau Gwent was ranked below the national average in 'percent of adults aged 16+ who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local areas'. Therefore, we want to work with our education providers, youth services, and youth forum to strengthen how we engage with children and young people.

- Delivery of Welsh Government funded anti-poverty programmes through the Children and Communities Grant.
- Establishment of 'warm hubs' throughout Blaenau Gwent, which offer sanctuary during the daytime to those struggling with rising living costs.
- Working in partnership with community settings to enhance and support the foodbank provision across the area.
- Development of Cost-of-Living Group and Workstream
- Successful delivery of the Blaenau Gwent 'Christmas Toy Appeal' for identified vulnerable children and young people.
- Promoted Cost-of-Living support schemes e.g. Council Tax discounts and reductions, winter fuel payments, and school uniform grants.
- Revised the Integrated Impact Assessment to ensure socio-economic groups with protected characteristics are fully considered.

- Undertake work, research, and analysis to understand the socio-economic situation of our LGBTQ+ and minority ethnic groups within Blaenau Gwent.
- Continue to prioritise support to Care leavers whose lives have been adversely affected because of the cost-of-living crisis.
- Consider the Children in Wales's Child Poverty Report's findings.

We aim to address the inequality faced by people who live in poverty and have protected characteristics, so that everyone can access opportunities and resources equally, no matter who they are, where they come from, or what they face. We aim to enable people with protected characteristics to engage fully and effectively in society, and to have a say and impact in the choices that affect them and finally, we hope to narrow the gaps and differences in outcomes and well-being among different