



**The Vale of Glamorgan Council's
Annual Equality Report
2022-2023**

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg.**

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Introduction

We must report on progress towards meeting our equality objectives and other equality matters every year by 31 March for performance in the previous year. This report tells you about our equality work between April 2022 and March 2023.

We do this to meet our duties under:

- the Equality Act 2010;
- the Public Sector Equality Duty (known as the ‘general duty’); and
- the specific duties for Wales.

We tell you how we have collected and used information to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- advance equality of opportunity; and
- foster good relations.

We also tell you about:

- how we are getting on with our equality objectives
- the people we employ
- other equality work.

Background

We have described our main equality work in our [Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024](#).

We agreed this plan in March 2020. It progresses our work from our previous plans in 2012 and 2016. There were a number of things we had to do to develop the first plan. We list the main steps below.

- We looked at the information we had on the people using our services. We especially wanted to know which protected groups were using our services.
- We met with local organisations to see if there were areas that we could work on together.
- We looked at other plans to see if they had actions that needed to be in the Strategic Equality Plan. These included the Corporate Plan and the Equality and Diversity Plan.
- We arranged events to meet with other organisations that have an interest in the needs of protected groups. We went to their meetings if they could not come to ours.
- We consulted with the public, staff, and trade unions.
- We talked to people about what our priorities should be.

This helped us to decide on our equality objectives. These are an important part of the Strategic Equality Plan.

We consulted people again in 2019 for our 2020 – 2024 Plan. We used feedback from engagement and consultation to develop a new set of equality objectives that give us a more balanced focus between internal and external outcomes. We have developed these using more recent research such as [‘Is Wales Fairer? 2018’](#) by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. We have also made links with our corporate wellbeing objectives.

To make sure we achieve the equality objectives, we put actions in service plans. These plans guide the work of each service area (such as Housing or Visible Services). Each service has to monitor progress with these actions and report on this.

We have a Cabinet member for Community Engagement, Equalities and Regulatory Services to lead on equality issues as well as an elected member Equalities Champion. Directors take the lead in their own service area.

We find out about the latest issues and guidance in a number of ways, including through the Equality and Human Rights Commission network.

Steps taken to identify and collect relevant information

We have been collecting information about who uses our services for some time. There is a corporate approach available for doing this so that our Services can collect data on protected groups in a consistent way. We encourage services to improve how they use this information to help them plan their work to better meet people's needs.

In this year's report, we report on the following services:

- Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing
- Adult Community Learning
- Benefits
- Communications
- Community Safety
- Customer Relations
- Electoral Registration
- Housing Solutions
- Human Resources
- Integrated Autism Service
- Learning and Skills – School Access and Organisation
- Learning and Skills – Social Inclusion and Wellbeing
- Leisure Services – Healthy Living Team
- Older People – Vale 50+ Forum
- Planning
- Procurement
- Social Services – Children and Young People's Services
- Social Services – Adult Services
- Supporting People
- Transport

- Tourism
- Vale Public Services Board
- Youth Service

When we look at the information gathered, we consider:

- the data gathered over the last few years;
- the systems used to gather the data; and
- how Services use this information to make improvements.

This helps managers to identify gaps in the information and take appropriate action.

To clarify why managers need to collect the information, we use guidance from Stonewall. You can see the guidance in [Appendix 1](#). The form we used to gather information is in [Appendix 2](#).

You can find the equality information that Services have collected in [Appendix 4](#). Each Service says how it has used the information to meet the three aims of the general duty.

The form we use to gather information for this report encourages Services to show how they have used the information to make improvements to services.

Reasons for not collecting relevant information

Some of the reasons for not collecting information include

- staff asking users for personal information face-to-face;
- users not wanting to complete another form;
- users not wanting to provide additional information;
- concern that limited surveys do not reflect a true picture;
- not having systems to collect the information;
- inappropriate to collate the information; and
- availability of data.

We encourage managers to explain the importance of this information to service improvement.

Statement on the effectiveness of steps taken to fulfil each of our equality objectives

Here is a short outline of how we developed our original objectives. You can find full details of this in our first [Strategic Equality Plan](#).

- We used national research to help us understand the issues. For example, we looked at 'How Fair is Wales' and 'Not Just Another Statistic' reports. The Equality and Human Rights Commission produced these reports.
- We looked at whether we had any information in the Council to tell us more.
- We talked to groups who know about the interests of protected groups
- We consulted with our own staff and the public.
- We agreed the equality objectives that we would work on for the next four years.

To review our objectives, we looked at more recent research such as 'Is Wales Fairer? 2018' by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. We also carried out engagement and consultation.

Following this, we agreed our equality objectives, listed below. We show what work we have done on these below.

Strategic Equality Objective One – Improve how we involve, engage, and communicate with protected groups about our work and decisions.

Strategic Equality Objective Two – Continue to reduce the gender pay gap in the Council, identify whether there is a pay gap for ethnic minorities in the Council by March 2022, and report on both annually.

Strategic Equality Objective Three – Improve employment opportunities in the Council for protected groups, particularly disabled and young people, to more closely reflect the diversity of the local population by March 2024.

Strategic Equality Objective Four – Continue to work on developing a more inclusive work environment that supports staff from all backgrounds to reach their potential through implementing a range of actions by March 2024.

Strategic Equality Objective Five – Provide support and development to elected members on equality issues.

Strategic Equality Objective Six – Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to address attainment gaps for children and young people and provide support to overcome barriers to them reaching their full potential.

Strategic Equality Objective Seven – Develop and implement processes throughout the life of this plan to address hate crimes, violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.

Strategic Equality Objective Eight – Consider the housing needs of people with protected characteristics and how our work impacts on them, taking action to address any disproportionate impacts on these groups.

Strategic Equality Objective Nine – Work in partnership to consider issues relating to transport accessibility, particularly for disabled people and older people.

Strategic Equality Objective Ten – Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to promote our natural and built environment and cultural heritage, including accessibility, to protected groups.

Strategic Equality Objectives

Strategic Equality Objective 1

Improve how we involve, engage, and communicate with protected groups about our work and decisions.

Contact centre - ContactOneVale

There were 171,986 phone calls to the C1V call centre between April 2022 and March 2023. The average wait time was 327 seconds. There were also around 35,000 emails to C1V. Approximately 87% of customer service enquiries were resolved at first contact.

Public Participation Strategy

The Communications team published our Public Participation Survey in May 2022 and have made strides in establishing an internal network to coordinate the Council's participation work. This includes representatives from key corporate teams and other services such as the Youth Service.

The Public Participation Strategy outlines the Council's current position on engagement and consultation, as well as setting out how we will be diverse in our engagement methods to provide as many stakeholders as possible the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process. We want people to be able to shape what we do and how we do it. We continue to explore new and innovative ways to connect with the public.

The Strategy also ensures that we bring all the Council's consultation, engagement, and participation activities together into a single, easily accessible online hub, with the long-term objective of developing a portal that joins together all pathways for participation in the Vale.

Consultations

We have engaged with residents of the Vale of Glamorgan throughout 2022-23 and held a number of consultations including:

- Local Development Plan
- Recycling and Waste Management Strategy
- Active Travel scheme proposals
- Keep Wales Tidy services
- Wellbeing Plan
- Penarth Pier and Esplanade
- Penarth Food Pod and Information Hub
- Draft budget proposals

Responses to the draft budget proposals were considered when putting forward final budget proposals to Cabinet.

We also held an in-person event at the Civic Offices which was well attended by tenants interested in getting involved in more engagement activity.

Age Friendly

The new Age Friendly Vale Officer has been recruited to focus on developing the Vale 50+ Strategy and progressing the application to achieve Age Friendly status. The Age Friendly Vale Officer has held events to continue to engage with older people and members of the Vale 50+ Forum, including the Festive Coffee Morning in December and other 'warm space' events.

Electoral Services

We work hard to reach various demographics. To encourage eligible residents of the Vale of Glamorgan to register to vote, we have continued to undertake a variety of activities to ensure everyone can register to vote. Activities continue to include:

- We used social media campaigns for International Youth Day and Local Democracy Week.
- We facilitated a point of contact in each Vale of Glamorgan care home to ensure that vulnerable adults can register without barriers.

- We use the weekly movement sheets provided to us to by the Homelessness Department so we can encourage homeless residents to register to vote. We started an incentive of £10 shopping voucher for any successful registration for anyone in homeless or supported accommodation
- We distribute all our social media output for sharing to the Vale of Glamorgan's Regional Resettlement Officer, who works with Syrian and Afghan nationals who have resettled in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- We have used social media and a resources pack for schools which was shared for distribution on Google classroom and other platforms to encourage registration for young people.
- We have utilised bus stop advertising aimed at young people and qualifying foreign nationals.
- We ran a competition to encourage young people between 14-17 to register.
- We carry out an annual house to house canvass to enable anyone that might need assistance to have the opportunity to register to vote

In addition, we have engaged with disabilities groups and charities for feedback on enhanced accessibility features at polling stations following implementation of the Elections Act. This Act also sees the introduction of Voter ID in polling stations, so we have included an information flyer with all council tax bills which are delivered to every household in the Vale of Glamorgan. This has been particularly helpful to older residents as we have received most enquiries about Voter ID from this group.

We have successfully applied for funding from Welsh Government on regional level with Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taf to purchase video equipment and training for Public Awareness Offices. They will create How to Vote videos aimed at specific groups including young voters, voters with disabilities, and qualifying foreign nationals.

Social Services – Children and Young People

We redeveloped our foster carer surveys to produce three separate surveys: recruitment and induction; training and development; and support. We also created more detailed questionnaires for the adoption service to ensure questions are more reflective of the experiences of adopters throughout their adoption journey. We continue to utilise a wide variety of communication methods to ensure that Flying Start families remain informed and involved. We have provided opportunities for parents to attend drop-in sessions at nursery settings.

We have included young people in the recruitment and interview process for Children and Young Peoples Services operational managers.

We have involved young people attending Ysgol y Deri in our engagement process to get their experiences and opinions on social workers, activities, and professional support. We also worked with their parents to explore their views about support and communication throughout their involvement. We consulted with involved professionals to obtain a full picture and feedback of our services.

For the 14 Plus Team, we expanded the question areas to include level of involvement in planning for the future, communication, and social worker contact. We also discussed signposting and support from other involved services.

We ensure all consultation and engagement communication is in plain English and available in easy read format. Citizen engagement is important to ensuring that our services are appropriate, effective and that we listen to our service users.

Social Services – Adult Services

Members of Vale People First are on the interview panel for all social care staff and manager appointments within the Learning Disabilities team. Vale People First are also key partners in monitoring the Supported Living Contract.

We ensure we have a person with lived experience on the interview panel at all mental health and substance misuse appointments. We have developed a proposal

for a peer-led research project looking at people's experiences of being assessed under the Mental Health Act, with the aim of delivery in 2023-24.

We engage with our service users to ensure that all citizens have an opportunity to have a say in improving the service they receive. We complete a feedback form in all consultation reports. We engage with users in Adult Placements, New Horizons day opportunities, residential services, and Vale Community Resource Service. We continue to explore whether citizens feel that they have more autonomy and choice over decisions that affect their care, and that methods we use to engage citizens and their families are open, accessible, appropriate, and interactive.

We worked with other local authorities and led on the Regional Medication Policy which was finalised in September 2022. Within this, we considered the support we give to maintain service users' independence.

Replacement Local Development Plan

We invited residents to complete our 'Register Your Interest' form to receive updates on the Replacement Local Development Plan and other consultation exercises. By monitoring this information, we are able to highlight underrepresented groups to target directly in order to diversify and strengthen the scope of our public engagement. The form is due to be replaced with a consultation portal in April 2023.

We have also engaged with residents and stakeholders regarding the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal scoping report and Supplementary Planning Guidance consultation, as well as with members of the gypsy and traveller community with Housing colleagues.

Strategic Equality Objective 2

Continue to reduce the gender pay gap in the Council, identify whether there is a pay gap for ethnic minorities in the Council by March 2022, and report on both annually.

We monitor the gender pay gap on a quarterly basis. We have seen a significant decline in the median gender pay gap which we report to the Welsh Government. The mean gender pay gap has remained similar over the last few years. We report on this quarterly through performance indicators and annually through this report.

The gender pay gap has increased slightly from last year. The difference in mean hourly rate between male and female employees is £1.03, an increase from £0.71 last year. The difference in median hourly rate between male and female employees is £1.02. The mean gender pay gap as a percentage of men's pay is 6.38% and the median gender pay gap as a percentage of men's pay is 7.06%, which is less than the UK median gender pay gap of 8.3%.

We also monitor the ethnicity pay gap on a regular basis, reporting as part of the Council's Quarterly Performance Indicators. The difference between White British and ethnic minorities' mean average hourly pay is £0.65. The difference between median average hourly pay is £0.37. The mean ethnicity pay gap is 4.20%. The median ethnicity pay gap is 2.66. Both have increased from last year.

The last pay review in 2019 in relation to the revised NJC spine had a positive impact on the gender pay gap. We are undertaking work to review the current pay structure and we will again consider both the gender and ethnicity pay gaps. When recruiting to roles, we consider where we advertise to ensure we are getting representation across all applicant groups. We continue to work on improving our diversity profile.

We increased salaries to the equivalent of the Real Living Wage and implemented new pay awards across the organisation. We agreed to increase pay for staff on first two grades of Council's scale to £9.90 per hour from £9.60 and £9.79 per hour.

Strategic Equality Objective 3

Improve employment opportunities in the Council for protected groups, particularly disabled and young people, to more closely reflect the diversity of the local population by March 2024.

We have explored how we reach different groups in relation to posting job adverts such as using different outlets and more varied imagery. We will continue to work with our staff networks to look at ways in which we can attract a more diverse range of applicants. We plan to consult with both internal and external groups to identify barriers to employment.

Colleagues from Human Resources, Communities for Work, Adult Services, Equalities, and the Integrated Autism Service came together for a Disability Task and Finish Group to discuss how the Council could better promote itself to applicants with disabilities as well as improving conditions and retention levels for current staff with disabilities. The overarching aim is for the Council to become an employer of choice. In the group we discussed the application and interview process, and what changes could be made to make the process easier for applicants with disabilities. We also discussed and implemented actual changes such as adding the Communities for Work banner to the Jobs page on the Vale of Glamorgan website:

 <p>Cymunedau am Waith Communities for Work</p>	<p>Need help with applying for these jobs? For employment support and further advice and guidance please contact Communities for Work:</p> <p> 07860784880 / 07874635237  c4w-barry@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk</p>
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We promoted National Apprenticeship Week in February 2023. We held a Youth Event in the Memo with the Communities for Work team to showcase the wide range of employment and training options for young adults in the Vale of Glamorgan. We offer a variety of apprenticeship and work experience opportunities through community investment opportunities such as the council housebuilding scheme. This has helped enhance peoples' skills and readiness for work. Opportunities are matched to local people via the Community Investment Team and are targeted towards individuals participating in employability initiatives.

The Adult Community Learning team continue to monitor equalities data of users to help identify individuals or groups who may require additional support, to inform the Curriculum Offer, and to offer more learner hours and out of classroom activities.

This year we have run an Employability Hub and warm spaces to support job seekers and people adversely impacted by the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis. We have run employability events for focused groups including young people, over 50s, and Welsh speakers. We continue to hold our Men's Shed group and social speaking groups for ESOL learners.

Communities for Work have been engaged to help open training and employment opportunities for citizens that attend the Day Service, following engagement with service users.

We have worked in partnership with colleagues in Prevention and Partnership which has resulted in securing funding through the Shared Prosperity Fund for three supported employment mentors to work with people with mental health problems, physical and / or learning disabilities, sensory needs, and autism to develop skills and confidence to secure voluntary and paid employment.

Strategic Equality Objective 4

Continue to work on developing a more inclusive work environment that supports staff from all backgrounds to reach their potential through implementing a range of actions by March 2024.

We continue our work as a Stonewall Diversity Champion using the Stonewall Workforce Equality Index to guide our work.

We continue to monitor and evaluate improvements towards further inclusion of our LGBTQ+ workforce. We took part in the Stonewall Workplace Equalities Index. We

were awarded a silver award for 2022/23 and ranked 126th out of 400, with a score of 60.5 out of 200.

We have two established staff networks in the Vale of Glamorgan Council: GLAM and Diverse. We are working on a new Disability staff network, and we have also started to think about an older people's group.

GLAM is our staff network for LGBTQ+ members and allies; Diverse is our network for Black, Asian, minority ethnic, and racialised people and allies; and the Disability network will be for staff with disabilities, staff with family or friends with disabilities, and allies. More information about the networks' activities and actions through this period can be found [later in the report](#).

The staff networks provide support and information to members, share knowledge and experiences, consult on Council policies, and help inform training. The networks are important in showing how the Council delivers its corporate values and culture as an inclusive employer of choice.

Throughout the year we post articles on Staffnet to mark various awareness days and events. These include Black Inclusion Week, National Inclusion Week, Race Equality Week, Pride Month, Black History Month, and specific days like IDAHOBIT, Windrush Day, Transgender Day of Visibility, and Non-Binary Awareness Day. Sharing information about these awareness days and events means we can raise awareness of different groups and minorities, contributing to a more inclusive work environment. In addition, we ensure relevant equalities-related content on iDev is up-to-date and promoting the right message.

As an outcome from the HR-run Disability Task and Finish Group, we have added the Communities for Work banner to the Jobs page of the Vale of Glamorgan website. We have also re-registered for the Disability confident scheme. These actions show how we strive to be a more inclusive and supportive place of work.

We continue to make wellbeing of staff a priority. We have continued to promote staff health and wellbeing through a range of activities and initiatives from remote

exercise sessions to online courses. Wellbeing champions are supported to promote health living and wellbeing. We have opened a wellbeing garden for staff in the Civic Offices providing an outside space to take a break. Over 1300 employees completed the staff wellbeing survey, which is more than previous surveys.

The new political leadership of the Council was agreed in May 2022 with the new Cabinet formed of five women and three men. The Leader stated that the new Cabinet “reflects my desire for better gender balance and diversity not just in politics but all positions of power.” This also reflects the gender balance of the Council’s workforce.

Social workers within the Vale Locality Mental Health Team received co-production training developed in liaison with Cardiff and Vale Action on Mental Health and delivered by a person with lived experience. Following this training, we developed a good practice toolkit for staff to use.

Staff and managers from services including Social Services and Environment attended an interactive race awareness workshop delivered by No Boundaries.

Strategic Equality Objective 5

Provide support and development to elected members on equality issues.

Members have access to iDev where they can find a range of e-learning modules on equality issues. They are also able to access previous sessions and presentations via MemberNet. Information has been provided during the year specifically in relation to race awareness.

We keep Members’ training and development under review and arrange to meet identified needs. Equality and Diversity training has been mandatory for all members from 2022 with an initial session held in June 2022 as part of the new Member Induction programme. This included information from the staff networks, GLAM and Diverse. Female members attended a Digital Citizen Workshop with Glitch in

October 2022. Sessions run by Red Shiny Apple about Equalities in Decision Making and Scrutiny were held for members in October 2022 and January 2023.

The presentations, links and resources from all training are available to members at any time via Membernet.

Strategic Equality Objective 6

Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to address attainment gaps for children and young people and provide support to overcome barriers to them reaching their full potential.

Vulnerable Groups Team

The Vulnerable Groups Team continues to support children and young people in elective home education (EHE). We also provide support for pupils who speak English as an additional language as well as advanced support for pupils in the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP) and other ethnic minorities.

The Vulnerable Groups Team operate alongside schools and Careers Wales to ensure all pupils in the SRP access education and careers support. We also assist young people in the SRP with the need to accelerate their learning, access training, and gain employment. Our aim is to raise the achievement for all pupils regardless of background.

In July 2022, we launched Education Workshops for Parents to help parents from Syria and Afghanistan become more involved in their children's education. The interpreters and multilingual Learning Support Assistants delivered the workshops in the parents' home languages. The first workshop was an enormous success because parents said they felt included and engaged in learning how to support their children's learning in schools in Wales. The parents requested that the Education Workshops took place on a termly basis. In July 2022, we re-assessed all targeted pupils in the SRP and found pupils had made substantial progress.

A third of the children in the SRP have an identified additional learning need (ALN) and just under half require extra targeted support. Children in Year 11 achieved GCSEs in line with their abilities in Summer 2022 and another has started university. These show significant successes for the support provided by the team.

Social Services – Children and Young People Services (CYPS)

CYPS is delivered based on eligibility for care and support which considers the individual, including their specific characteristics. As such, it is important that we accurately and effectively monitor equalities information. We have started to produce weekly reports for managers to monitor and improve the recording of equalities information on our recording system Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS).

We collate data on all protected characteristics as part of our citizen engagement programme and are looking at how we could include this data in WCCIS. We use data to inform and assist service delivery as well as to report in annual statutory returns to Welsh Government.

The majority of service users are white, British, and English speaking. Slightly more boys than girls are registered. There is a noticeable decrease in the number of children not recording their ethnicity and religion this year, which is a direct result of weekly monitoring introduced this year.

We have worked with local leisure centre provision to enable young people to get more access to reduced rate physical activities and support to attend the gym. This is an ongoing concern with further engagement planned for 2023/24.

We continue to provide the following services:

- Families First Advice Line (FFAL)
- Team Around the Family (TAF)
- Vale Parenting Service (VPS)
- Flying Start
- Fostering and adoption services

We ensure that our literature is available in both English and Welsh. We provide interpreters for other languages where required. We also work with parents with disabilities, making necessary adjustments to our practices where required.

All members of the Social Services Senior Management Team attended an interactive Race Awareness workshop hosted by No Boundaries.

Youth Service

We provide social and informal educational opportunities through open access provision to all young people between the ages of 11 and 25. Most of our members are aged between 11 and 16. Members from this age group have grown in number in line with increased activity with Year 7 and 8 children following the pandemic. There has been a decline in the number of members aged over 17 as there has been a reduction in post-16 NEET provision.

We produce young person friendly documents such as consultation results and feedback and annual reports. We distribute this information through paper copies and digital media.

We have an active participation unit that supports a number of forums and the youth cabinet across the Vale and supports us to consult with protected groups and those hard-to-reach young people.

We are developing a new membership form to improve how we collect equalities data. We have increased opportunities to access Welsh language provision for speakers and learners by working with the Urdd. We continue to seek further opportunities to develop this work. We recognised a lack of older members and working on opportunities that are specifically aimed at this group. We recognise that we could do more to engage with ethnic minority groups and are utilising a Welsh government grant to research what this should encompass. This grant will also look to pilot a disability project.

We run an LGBTQ+ youth group, I AM ME. This is a targeted youth club for young people aged 13 to 18 who are part of the LGBTQ+ community or allies. The group

meets weekly in Barry and has approximately 15 members from across the Vale of Glamorgan. In the last year, I AM ME have had several guest speakers including SHOT who spoke with the young people about healthy relationships and safe sex; and Mike Mainwaring from Children in Wales who delivered LGBTQ+ training to the group.



I AM ME members also requested pronoun badges. Members and staff across the Vale Youth Service now wear these badges. We obtained a badge making machine so pronoun and flag badges can be made at Youth Service events and sessions.

We also run an 18+plus additional needs youth club, Youthy 18+. Membership is currently around ten young people aged between 18 and 25. Many of our members have a range of additional learning needs (ALN) from mild autism to more profound ALN. Young people can attend with their own support workers if necessary. The aim of this group is to provide older young people with a safe space to meet with their friends, work on life skills such as cooking, college applications, CVs, employment opportunities, and support socialising.

Members have worked on a variety of projects including tackling the cost-of-living crisis, finding healthier and cheaper alternatives to fast food, money management, and budgeting.

We also provide informal Welsh language youth activities. We fund disability dance and Teenscheme activities through our Welsh Government grant funding. This also support the ongoing development of projects with this group. Our teams work with individuals to assess their needs and work on bespoke activities.

Transgender Toolkit for Schools

We have begun revising our Transgender Toolkit and Guidance for Schools. We put this out for consultation in February 2023 with different stakeholders such as governors, headteachers, school staff, parents, pupils, and community groups through Participate Vale. Members of the I AM ME youth group also provided feedback. The toolkit forms part of the suite of guidance documentation that we provide to schools on a range of issues including bullying, safeguarding, and protected characteristics.

School meals

From September 2022 we offered Free School Meals offer to all Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 children. This was extended to all primary school children (Reception, and Years 1 to 6) from April 2023. Both dates were in advance of Welsh Government ambitions.

The continued rollout ensures as many as children as possible will enjoy a healthy free meal in school as well as contributing towards cost-of-living support.

Pupil Development Grants

Schools have been proactive in encouraging qualifying parents to apply for Free School Meals and Pupil Development Grants, and we have not seen a decline in applications following universal free school meal entitlement. In fact, we have received more Pupil Development Grant applications for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 from September 2022 to March 2023 than a full year's worth of applications from September 2021 to August 2022, 699 compared to 860. This may well reflect the greater financial pressures on families and parents than previous years. We have also invited families to claim, identifying cases through reports based on qualifying income.

For the period September 2022 to March 2023, we awarded 3345 Pupil Development Grants (also known as School Essentials Payments), of which 69 were for Children Looked After. A total of £774,750 has been paid out. This is higher than previous years because the Welsh Government provided an additional £100 for each

qualifying school year, so £300 for children in Year 7 and £225 for Reception to Year 11. The amounts will revert to £200 and £125 respectively from September 2023.

Bullying

The Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing team analyse school bullying data to identify trends and to review anti-bullying strategies to address findings. In January 2021, a Model Anti-Bullying policy was provided to all schools within the Vale of Glamorgan. The Model Anti-Bullying policy was compiled to ensure interoperability with Welsh Government 'Rights, Respect, Equality' guidance 2019.

The policy not only considers 'unkind' behaviour in the form of traditional bullying but also places significant emphasis on the focus of all forms of bullying including one off prejudice related incidents that focus on protected characteristics.

We currently await publication of the Welsh Government Peer on Peer Sexual Harassment action plan in September 2023 which will set in place clear actions for schools, Local Authority, and Welsh Government in tackling peer on peer sexual harassment along with misogyny, transphobia, homophobia, and biphobia.

In Spring 2022, we developed a 'How to Guide' for schools to assist in tackling peer on peer sexual harassment in secondary school settings. This was in response to the initial Welsh Government action plan. We distributed the guide to all schools to:

- Provide detailed guidance for a school approach for raising awareness, supporting victims, and challenging learners who carry out discriminatory and prejudice behaviour
- Improve confidence of School and Directorate staff in recognising, supporting, and tackling those affected by discriminatory behaviour.

Analysis of school bullying data captured by the 'My Concern' bespoke ICT system used by Vale schools between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 shows the following headlines:

- There were 86 incidents of bullying were recorded across all school.
- The bullying category with highest recorded levels was 'bullying focussed on appearance' (23 records), followed by Homophobic/Biphobic/Transphobic bullying (18 records).
- A total of 100 'one-off prejudice incidents' were recorded, the highest recording for a particular category was for 'race' with 58 being recorded.

We are currently unable to complete any comparable data examination on an academic yearly or termly basis as the new way of reporting has only been active since November 2021. We hope this will be possible in the 2023-24 reporting period.

We actively engage with third sector providers, such as No Boundaries and Barnardo's to support schools in raising awareness of race and other forms of prejudice. Bullies Out have delivered workshops and training programmes to schools in the Vale of Glamorgan. This continues to be a very successful partnership. During Summer term 2022, we worked with Barnardo's to deliver awareness training on harmful sexual behaviour to staff from secondary schools and the Youth Service.

Social Inclusion and Wellbeing

We continue to monitor rates of attendance in relation to protected characteristics, some on a case-by-case basis, to analyse if these pupils have lower attendance rates than expected.

We also monitor the rates of attendance for pupils who are entitled to free school meals as this is an indicator of socio-economic disadvantage and promoting equality of opportunity.

We analyse and monitor this data at a local authority level, school level, and individual case level. If we identify issues at specific schools around inclusion and protected characteristics, then we implement targeted support. We provide bespoke support measures on a case-by-case basis. We undertake multi-agency working to ensure schools receive the appropriate support and signposting to other agencies and professional services.

We are trained by the Resilience Project in supporting mental health needs and offering support to learners who are transitioning or facing difficulties linked to their sexual orientation. We continue to share resources from Mermaids and Stonewall to support learners and their families with this information.

We have used the Elective Home Education (EHE) Welsh Government grant to support EHE learners with vulnerabilities and protected characteristics access support and services.

We have promoted training related to inclusion and exclusion issues in terms of pastoral care in schools. We have created new Liaison Engagement Officers (LEO) from September 2022 to link schools with help and support for vulnerable families through biweekly LEO surgeries. We are already identifying areas of need that may not previously have come to the attention of the inclusion team. This approach shows our focus on understanding and meeting the specific needs of vulnerable learners rather than a punitive approach to incidents.

We have also created and are rolling out a new training offer that identifies the Welsh Government approach to penal measures, incorporating the use of emotional based school avoidance (EBSA) approaches to embed and enable a way to deal with the rise in learners with anxious and phobic issues and needs. This aligns with revised and updated training on Pastoral support plans. The exclusion training has an enhanced focus on the public sector equality act and protected characteristics.

The Vulnerable Groups Team started a research project with six schools to produce case studies on how schools can be actively anti-racist and contribute to the Council Anti Racist Action Plan. We developed a portal to track the attainment of looked after children. This portal supports us to identify the gaps in progress for looked after children. We developed a virtual school to track the attendance of pupils who are refugees and asylum seekers.

We provided all schools with a template to update their Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) which is aligned to the Council's Strategic Equality Plan.

Ysgol y Deri

We have worked with Ysgol y Deri on a Bocs Bwyd project. Pupils will gain first hand work experience. A mobile canteen unit has been donated by Morgan Sindall to enable this function to be sustained after project completion. Bocs Boyd and Ysgol Y Deri are also working with the Big Fresh catering company in developing paid work opportunities for young people.

Opportunities

As part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme, we are committed to providing quality educational facilities for school pupils and also the wider community. During the 2022 summer holidays, we provided 4G pitches at Whitmore School free of charge to the Joe Ledley Football Academy who offered discounted rates to their summer soccer camps. We also provided free lunch and snacks which enabled lots of children to attend who may otherwise be excluded.

420 pupils in five Barry schools participated in Welsh Government's 'Reform of the School Day'. The schools developed a joint timetable of an extended school day to include additional learning and wellbeing opportunities for vulnerable pupils outside of school hours. We have progressed specific localised projects to tackle inequalities such as the Active Beyond the School Day project at Pencoedtre High, which supports pupils to access free afterschool sports provision alongside provision of food.

We have created apprentice places across the Council which have provided employment opportunities for young people aged 16 to 24 in Neighbourhood Services and Housing and Building Services. We have also collaborated with the Vale Academy and Communities for Work schemes.

Youth Offending Service

The Vale of Glamorgan Youth Offending Service (YOS) was given an overall rating of 'good' following an inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. Staff were praised for their knowledge and overall delivery of work that helps deter children and young people from crime. The service was found to have met the balance between helping children and protecting the public. The YOS offer a range of support to prevent

offending, drug counselling, enable children to address any harm caused to victims or the wider community through victim awareness, and assist parents in promoting positive behaviour and outcomes.

Strategic Equality Objective 7

Develop and implement processes throughout the life of this plan to address hate crimes, violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.

The Community Safety team have continued to process anti-social behaviour incidents across the Vale of Glamorgan and work to deliver preventative measures to reduce anti-social behaviour. There has been a reduction in referrals from Stage 1, demonstrating the effectiveness of the process in reducing anti-social behaviour escalation. Anti-social behaviour in specific areas such as derelict buildings in Penarth and fires started in Barry Island has prompted the Community Safety Team to deliver more preventative measures. We have also successfully bid for PCC funding for engagement work with these young people and other multi-agency discussions to discuss prevention work.

We have worked with South Wales Police in relation to increased off-road biking incidents. Anti-social behaviour along the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan coastline has more than halved in the last two years as a result of Operation Elstree, a multi-agency approach aimed at keeping coastal areas safe and family friendly. From May to September 2022, there were over 1800 fines issued for public offences, 23 arrests, and over a thousand additional patrol hours on foot, horse, quad bike, and boat.

We also continue to work with Safer Wales and several specialist services to signpost victims who may require different support. These services include Bawso, the Dyn Project, New Pathways, Rainbow Bridge, and Live Fear Free. New projects and groups in 2022/23 include the Cedar Project (Pobl) and Drive, which focuses on males who perpetrated or caused harm.

We have continued to work on the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) strategy, updating for 2023-28. The updated strategy

includes new commitments around strangulation, children as victims in their own right, and new policies for street and workplace harassment. We work with Vale Domestic Abuse Service (Vale DAS) who have changed their name from Atal y Fro. They remain the specialist support provider in the Vale working to ensure that victims of domestic abuse have access to help, support, and protection.

We provide twice-weekly meetings which have improved outcomes for victims of high-risk domestic abuse by ensuring a more rapid multi-agency approach is provided. There were around 12 cases reported each month. Approximately 3% of cases were LGBT+ victims and 5% were Black or minority ethnic. On average 7% of cases were diverted away from the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) process. Of cases reviewed in MARAC process, most victims were female.

We continue to actively promote Clare's Law as a vital tool to support the safety of women who think they might be at risk of being in a relationship with a perpetrator of domestic abuse. There were on average 11 applications per month to Clare's Law.

We have processed standard and medium Public Protection Notices (PPNs) where the victim has given consent for their data to be shared. In the first half of the year, we had 270 cases. The majority of cases were female victims. Over 100 of these cases were repeat offenders, which is within expectations. Over 500 referrals were made by DAARC (Domestic Abuse Assessment and Referral Coordinator). 100% of domestic abuse victims reported feeling safer as a result of security improvements to their homes delivered by the Safer Vale Partnership.

On average we see around 12 hate incidents every month. Of these, the majority are migratorily racial incidents, with 150 racial related crimes in 2022/23. The next most common incidents are due to sexual orientation and transgender issues, which had 31 incidences each in 2022/23. We continue to work with South Wales Police to actively promote the reporting of hate crime so increases in the number of reported incidents are not necessarily seen as negative indications of actual increases in hate crime.

We continue to make progress on the Safer Vale Partnership delivery plan to complete actions by March 2023. We are also working on a communication strategy

to be launched alongside the Safer Vale Strategy 2023-28, updated this year. We work with the Safer Vale Partnership to create a safer environment for people to live, work, and visit, free from crime, disorder, and the fear of crime. The 2020-2023 Safer Vale Partnership strategy focuses on anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, community cohesion, and community engagement, responding actively to any other community issues that arise.

We continue to look at improving the Community Cohesion Group Agenda and membership, including reaching out to communities that are currently under-represented. We have recruited a new community cohesion officer who has supported progress on the actions in the community cohesion plan and helped to promote community initiatives and national days via our social media platforms.

We continue to have an active online presence to improve cohesion and provide information to residents. In this period, Community Safety posted over 200 times on Instagram to 170 followers, tweeted an average fifty times a month to the 960 followers on Twitter, and posted regularly to the 640 Facebook followers. Facebook posts also included sharing posts from other partner organisations.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council received media attention in August 2022 following a refusal to cancel hugely popular Drag Queen Story Hour events at libraries across the county. A small number of protestors objected to the events. The Council released a statement saying “we are proud to offer experiences that reflect the diversity of our residents. Drag Queen Story Hour is an opportunity to inspire a love of reading, while teaching deeper lessons about diversity, self-love and an appreciation of others. There are also important messages around acceptance and inclusivity”.

Strategic Equality Objective 8

Consider the housing needs of people with protected characteristics and how our work impacts on them, taking action to address any disproportionate impacts on these groups.

Draft Older Peoples Housing Strategy 2022 – 2036

The Strategy sets out how the Council will work in partnership with residents and stakeholders to meet the housing requirements for older people and maximise opportunities to improve the quality of life for older residents of the Vale of Glamorgan. It provides a high-level vision and framework for addressing the needs of an aging population. During 2022, we consulted with staff across the Council, partner organisations, older people, and used analysis of local demographics. The Draft Strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2023.

Affordable housing

In Quarter 2, 89% of the 36 dwellings approved through planning were designated as affordable housing. We continue to apply robust affordable housing policies and negotiate with developers to secure 30-40% of affordable housing.

SMART houses

Three residents have moved into the newly developed Transition SMART house in Castle Avenue, Penarth. The scheme aims to improve outcomes for our citizens by supporting independent living and enhancing well-being. A further SMART house in Carys Close was completed in November 2022.

Refugees

We are developing around 90 units of temporary accommodation in Llantwit Major to provide high-quality short-term housing for Ukrainian refugees. We are committed to the Welsh Government's declaration that Wales is a 'Nation of Sanctuary' and continue to make a significant effort to helping those in need. The units are not permanent structures so can be moved to another location in the future if needed. We are also looking at working with the Ministry of Defence with a view to leasing around ten properties to help accommodate Afghan refugees.

Supporting people

The Supporting People programme is responsible for engaging hard to reach vulnerable clients and providing them with support to maintain their tenancies. Services are open to everyone, and referrals are based on individual need. There are no barriers to receiving our services. A total of 3392 people received support this

year. Due to the large number of alarm services that we fund, the over 60s are the largest demographic of service users. There are more females than males receiving support, with 61% of service users identifying as female and the majority of those receiving support identify as white British at 57%.

We carry out equality monitoring on all service users and tenants to ensure that all those with protected characteristics are not adversely affected by policies or services in any way. We have also commissioned a new violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence (VAWDASV) service.

Housing Solutions

Homelessness prevention continues to be a priority for the Council. The Housing Solutions team deliver the statutory homelessness function, manage temporary accommodation, and provide housing advice. We work with schools and Llamau on the Youth Homelessness Project as a preventative measure to support young people and learners at risk of homelessness. We are also responsible for the Homes4U housing allocations system on behalf of social landlords in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The overall number of Homes4U applications has decreased this year, but the number of male applicants has slightly increased. This is expected because of changes in legislation due to the pandemic. We had guidance from the Welsh Government to remove priority need investigations, which has historically been important in managing demand.

The Housing Solutions team continue to work with households to minimise barriers to accessing accommodation. The increased prevention funding provides opportunities to save existing tenants and provide bonds or rent in advance for new tenancies in the private rented sector. In terms of accessing social rented accommodation, we also allow former tenants with outstanding debts to re-join the housing waiting list provided repayment agreements are in place and 25% of the debt has been cleared.

We have worked to influence the Rapid Rehousing Strategy which has now been finalised. We will use the plan to review social housing development and the

Homes4U scheme. We have appointed a Rapid Rehousing Officer to progress actions within the Rapid Rehousing Strategy. The Strategy sets out how the Council will reduce the reliance on use of bed and breakfast and other forms of temporary accommodation. We also aim to reduce the costs of temporary accommodation by building more social housing, working with private landlords to make more private rentals available, and considering scope to remove restrictions which affect homeless peoples' ability to bid for certain properties such as age designated homes and properties subject to local lettings criteria.

The Older Persons Housing Strategy has been adopted in principle by Cabinet. The strategy reflects best practise and emerging trends, incorporating feedback from a range of partners, including colleagues from Adult Services, Health, Vale 50+ Forum, and registered social landlords.

We will continue to assess the allocation process for households with accessible housing needs to ensure that applicants with disabilities are considered for a greater number of homes considering all reasonable and appropriate adaptations.

Benefits

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction help many people across the Vale of Glamorgan with their housing costs. It is key to the Council's work with regards to socio-economic disadvantage and cost of living. Whilst we help many people with protected characteristics, legislation specifically dictates how entitlement for these people is assessed. For example, disability can impact the rate of entitlement and there are different regulations for people of pension age.

We ask questions via our online claim form to accurately calculate entitlement. Some questions are mandatory but other questions about race, ethnicity and national identity are optional. The answer does not impact the rate of entitlement but helps to ensure we are reaching people across the Vale. Many people leave the questions about race, ethnic group, and national identity blank. However, of 5479 responses, 5016 declared their ethnic identity as White British. The next highest groups were White Other (162) and White and Black Caribbean (48).

There has been a decrease in the working-age Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction caseload. The number of working age passported claims receiving both Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction has reduced from 2658 to 1838. These reductions reflect more working age people moving onto Universal Credit. We did not however expect to see a reduction in pension age claims from 1309 to 1217, so we will continue to monitor and consider targeted work to ensure that pensioners continue to apply for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction.

This information allows us to plan for the impact of other welfare reforms which may impact on the Discretionary Housing Payments budget. We also extract data throughout the year to monitor caseload and trends. This assists with budgetary planning for Council Tax Reduction. We expect to see a reduction in Working Age Housing Benefit as Universal Credit is replacing Housing Benefit for working age claims and this allows us to try and future-plan. It also helps us to plan for staffing levels.

Gypsy and Traveller accommodation

We published our Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment in June 2022 which provides a robust and credible assessment of current and future need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the Vale of Glamorgan. This has contributed to the new Local Development Plan (LDP) period to 2036. The study has estimated additional pitch provision for the LDP period of eleven pitches across the county and that there may be a need for more transit provision to fully support nomadic families.

Strategic Equality Objective 9

Work in partnership to consider issues relating to transport accessibility, particularly for disabled people and older people.

Work began in January 2023 on the new transport interchange at the Dock Offices and Barry Docks station. This will be a meeting point for different modes of transport, connecting trains, buses, cycle, and taxi services, creating a hub of sustainable

travel. This is being delivered in partnership with the Cardiff Capital Region and Welsh Government.

We are planning bus stop improvements in Rhoose using funding from Welsh Government to enhance the Active Travel scheme and provide an improved facility for Cardiff Airport Rail Link Service. Further bus stop upgrades are planned for other Vale towns to include solar-powered displays and improve accessibility.

We continue to operate the Greenlinks adapted service for residents with mobility issues, ensuring drivers are fully trained to transport disabled passengers. We work collaboratively with the Vale 50+ Forum, youth cabinet, and public transport buses to meet the Public Services Vehicle Accessibility regulations.

Transport is a major concern to visitors to Barry Island, as shown by the Tourism service's annual survey. 94% of respondents said car parking, road access and public transport were very, poor, average or good. 61% of respondents travelled by car, and 76% classed themselves as 'local'. 50% of respondents rate Barry Island 'good' as a destination and 78% would definitely return. Transport and accessibility remain top concerns to the public.

Strategic Equality Objective 10

Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to promote our natural and built environment and cultural heritage, including accessibility, to protected groups.

We have improved accessibility at Barry Island. There is now provision for beach wheelchairs at Whitmore Bay in Barry Island, as well as new Changing Places facilities located at the Western Shelter.

Responses to the Barry Island Customer Satisfaction Survey 2022 show that most visitors are return visitors who would recommend the resort to others. The location

and beach are the strongest factors motivating people to visit. Most respondents said they were not disabled whilst there is criticism about the increased number of disabled parking spaces. We are looking at how we can survey a wider range of visitors with different protected characteristics, including those with disabilities.

We launched a new Community Development Team in Autumn 2022 to assist communities with projects and accessing funding, building on the good work of the Vale's Creative Rural Communities program which ended in 2022.

We invited community groups to apply for the Mayor's Foundation Grant Fund and Strong Communities Grant Fund in Summer 2022.

We offered local groups the opportunity to access funding via the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund. We held a series of 'hack' days aimed at third sector organisations and local businesses to work together to develop new ideas to tackle the effects of the cost-of-living crisis and other social challenges.

We held a second PhotoBARRYthon in August 2022 over three separate free events, giving participants the opportunity to capture different aspects of Barry.

We worked with partners and residents to transform a derelict site in Barry into a flourishing garden space for the community to enjoy.

Other matters relevant to the general duty and specific duties

You will see in [Appendix 4](#) which services have collected data and promoted equality.

In addition, we report below on other matters that help us to promote equality.

Socio-Economic Duty

We established a cross-departmental group in May 2022 in response to the cost-of-living crisis. Over 35,000 eligible residents received one-off £150 Cost of Living Support payments, based on households in Council Tax bands A-D and customers receiving Council Tax Reduction. The group oversaw the administration of the Welsh Government discretionary fund to support those not eligible for the main scheme but were still impacted by the financial pressures associated with the cost of living. As of December 2022, over 8,500 people have been paid a total of £1,705,400 and a further 958 applicants are being processed.

As part of our work to support residents through the cost-of-living crisis, we developed the Warm Welcome / Croeso Cynnes scheme. This is a network of community spaces that offer a warm and inviting place to come together over the winter months, at no cost. We have awarded nearly £30,000 to community projects through the Warm Welcome initiative, accessed by more than 3,500 people. Nearly 40 locations across the Vale took part. Some settings provided activities such as crafts or books, others provided wi-fi and space to work with a laptop. All locations provided refreshments, from teas and coffees to cooked meals. Around ten schemes will end provision in the Spring, but the majority will continue, providing a valuable community service.

We have also received funding to help tackle food poverty. By December 2022, we had awarded:

- £32,747 via the Household Support Fund to directly support households;

- £29,920 in Direct Food Support funding has been allocated to local food support organisations;
- £50,000 of Discretionary Cost of Living funding has been used to support the Vale Foodbank and the local community food offers run through the six schools in the Pencoedtre school cluster.
- £11,671 of Warm Banks funding has been allocated to a range of organisations for the Warm Welcome / Croeso Cynnes scheme.

We also understand and appreciate that many Council staff are also impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. In response, we have created a cost-of-living hub on Staffnet. This provides information about budgeting, claiming benefits, and health and wellbeing, as well as links to advice agencies. We also have a dedicated cost of living page on the external Vale of Glamorgan website, with a wealth of information and resources. We also held a cost-of-living webinar in November 2022.

Equality Impact Assessments

We assess the impact of our work on protected groups. We publish the results of our assessments on our website.

The process for carrying out equality impact assessments links to guidance, research, and data. Only officers may start the process before contacting the Equality Team for further advice. We hope this process will improve the quality of the assessments.

We continue to support managers to think about their work in this way. We provide training on how to carry out assessments. There is an e-learning module for people to learn how to do it. We ask them to show their considerations in a formal record that we can publish.

It is important for us to consider how budget changes and increased pressure on budgets might affect our services. As we prepare budgets, we think about how

changes might affect protected groups. We also think about how we can minimise adverse impacts on them. We publish on our website the assessment of how the budget impacts on protected groups.

In preparation for the introduction of the Social-economic Duty which came into force on 31 March 2021, we amended our equality impact assessment process and guidance to take account of socio-economic disadvantage. At the same time, we also reflected Welsh language considerations in the assessment process.

We have considered the Audit Wales report '[Equality Impact Assessments: More than a Tick Box Exercise](#)'. As a result, we have begun a review of our process with internal and external stakeholders, including Equality Consultative Forum members.

Equality Training

We continue to offer e-learning modules on a range of equality topics. This training covers areas including equality and diversity; discrimination; the Equality Act; how to assess the impact of our work on protected groups (equality impact assessments); disability awareness; and LGBTQ+ and trans issues.

Staff can access the e-learning modules from their Council provided computers and from their personal devices. This can make it easier for some people to do the training. We are also able to monitor who has completed the training.

Equality and Diversity training has been mandatory for all members from 2022 with an initial session held in June 2022 as part of the new Member Induction programme.

Anti-Racism Training

No Boundaries delivered anti-racism training to the Strategic Leadership Team in November 2022. We decided that it would be useful to roll the training out to other departments.

The anti-racism workshop was then delivered to staff from Neighbourhood Services, Transport, Shared Regulatory Services, and Environment and Housing Services in March 2023. Around 15 members of staff took part.

Procurement

Procurement ensures that the Council's procurement process takes into account the Public Sector Equalities Duty and is compliant with statutory legislation including due diligence through its tender documentation.

The Council's mandatory due diligence selection process refers to the potential supplier's statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 with each protected characteristic individually specified. If the response is unsatisfactory, it automatically fails meaning the supplier will not progress any further in the procurement exercise. The award stage of the procurement process also includes equality and diversity requirements for evaluation.

We have published a new Procurement Policy and Strategy for 2023-2027. The overall aim is that all procurement decisions are made through the lens of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The new policy includes a framework for minimum, expected and preferred standards for specific areas in sustainable and ethical procurement. These standards will be reflected in the Council's procurement processes and documentation

Disability Confident Scheme

We are proud to be a member of this scheme. It recognises employers who help disabled candidates into work and support employees if they suffer ill health during their working lives.

Under the scheme, we help people with disabilities in a number of ways:

- **Accessible interviews**

We remove barriers to interviews by providing things like car parking; signers; Braille; wheelchair access; a loop system; or interpreter.

- **Prior Consideration**

We guarantee an interview to people with disabilities so long as they meet the essential requirements of the person specification for the post.

- **Interview location**

We can arrange for a visit to the interview location before the interview. We can then make adjustments or adaptations before the interview if needed.

- **Developing abilities**

We make sure there is an opportunity for people to develop and use their abilities. We do this through our Personal Development Review system, #itsaboutme.

- **Supporting employees**

We support staff to stay in employment if they become disabled. We provide an occupational health service and a counselling service.

- **Raising awareness**

We arrange training to help staff know more about disability. We also advertise our commitment on Staffnet and on posters in the building.

- **Reviewing the scheme**

We check regularly how the scheme is running and plan improvements.

Stonewall Diversity Champion

We continue to be a member of Stonewall's Diversity Champions Programme. We developed an action plan to improve the workplace for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people. This helps us to make sure that we treat people fairly when they are employees or when they are applying for jobs.

Our work has included supporting an LGBTQ+ and allies' network. We also have LGBTQ+ Champions at both Member and senior management level.

We take part in Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index. The WEI provides a framework to improve lesbian, gay, bi and trans inclusion in the workplace.

As part of our work for the Workplace Equality Index and with support from Stonewall, we drafted a Transitioning at Work Policy include a question and answer section.

During the previous three years, the Council has continued to improve its standing in the Workplace Equalities Index. This is particularly impressive given that the number of organisations taking part has significantly increased. The Vale of Glamorgan Council was awarded a silver award for 2022/23 and ranked 126th.

Race Equality Week

We marked Race Equality Week for the second time by promoting Race Equality Matters' 5 Day Challenge through emails and articles on Staffnet+. Staff across the Council were encouraged to complete the five minute daily reflective exercises and challenges, watching videos to explore different themes including microaggressions and being anti-racist.

Within the daily articles, we shared information about the Diverse network, Trailblazer status, Safe Space, and promoted the #MyNameIs solution.

Day five of Race Equality Week calls for staff to make a Big Promise to show commitment to race equality. Senior leaders took part, and we shared the Big Promise of the Chief Executive and Director of Resources.

Over 99% of Vale of Glamorgan Council staff received the articles and daily challenges by email. The articles were also shared on Staffnet+, with each article viewed over 1000 times.

Trailblazer Status

In August 2022, the Vale of Glamorgan Council was awarded Race Equality Matters Trailblazer status in recognition of its work to address racial inequality across the organisation, addressing racial inequality and become a more diverse, inclusive, and equal organisation.

Designed to recognise organisations driving meaningful change in the race equality sphere, Trailblazer status has been determined by an independent panel of experts, all with lived experience of race inequality in the workplace.

The panel deemed that the Council's work to ensure that ethnic minority voices are heard in Safe Space meetings was "clear and substantial" and gave the highest score possible for making sure that improvement suggestions were implemented.

Only 64% of applicants achieving Trailblazer status which demonstrates how seriously the judges took this decision as well as the level of achievement attained by the Council.

Safe Space

A second Safe Space meeting was held in December 2022 to develop and continue actions and progress from the first Safe Space meeting in February 2022.

Windrush Day

We celebrated Windrush Day 2022 by raising the Windrush flag outside the Civic Offices. We held a moment of reflection for invited guests including young people from the Vale's youth parliaments, members of the Diverse network, Senior Leadership Team, Councillors and external guests. For 2023, we have worked with a local artist and Holton School to deliver an arts project to celebrate and raise awareness of Windrush and migration stories, funded by a Arts Council Wales grant.

Staff Networks

Our staff networks work collaboratively with many Council departments and staff members as well as providing support to Council employees. They also contribute to the Council's Stonewall Workplace Equality Index submissions.

GLAM

GLAM is the Vale of Glamorgan Council's LGBTQ+ staff network, welcoming LGBTQ+ staff and allies from across the council. There are over 40 members made up of staff, senior leadership, and councillors. GLAM have supported management training sessions on equality, diversity, and inclusion as well as contributing to articles about awareness days and promoting pronouns in email signatures.

GLAM held Uni-Tea Pride planning events in July and August 2022 to prepare for Pride Cymru on 27 August 2022. GLAM members, friends and family attended the parade in Cardiff and also took part in Barry Pride in October 2022, in Barry Island.

We were able to obtain sponsorship to fund new GLAM t-shirts for members and a set of placards and banner to show the GLAM logo and corporate values. Members of the Strategic Leadership Team signed the placards to symbolise the Council's commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion.



Placards on Queen Street, Cardiff for Pride Cymru



Placards and banner with GLAM members at Barry Island following Barry Pride

The GLAM chair left the Council in January 2023 and the process is underway to find a replacement chair or co-chairs to ensure the activity and role of the network is maintained. We are also using this as an opportunity to refresh the network, looking at the workstreams and promoting membership across the Council, including in schools.

GLAM continues to work with the Diverse network to ensure the Vale of Glamorgan is a positive, inclusive, and nurturing place to live and work.

Diverse

The Diverse staff network works to raise awareness, provide a social and supportive environment, and have a positive impact for colleagues from ethnic minorities in the workplace. All Council employees and members are welcome to join.

Diverse works with different Council departments to promote race equality and to improve employment and service delivery for ethnic minority employees and communities. Diverse also supports mandatory race awareness and unconscious bias training for staff along with anti-racism workshops in schools.

Diverse has held a number of meetings including a book club in October 2022 where members discussed Reni Eddo-Lodge's *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People*

About Race, and a watch party in January 2023 for the BBC short film *Black and Welsh*.

Diverse members have played had a significant role in the Safe Space meetings and achieving the Trailblazer accolade.

Disability Network

We have begun work to start a disability staff network. Two initial meetings have been held, one in December 2022 and the second in January 2023, where staff from across the Council came together to discuss what they want from a disability network. There was a lot of interest and a strong sense of wanting a base to obtain support and information, as well as to provide a voice to make sure staff with disabilities are considered at all levels of the employee journey. Many staff were willing to share their own stories and experiences, which will add real value and worth to the network. Steps are underway to decide a name for the group and plan terms of reference or constitution.

Menopause Awareness

The Council recognises that a large and increasing proportion of its workers will be working through and beyond the menopause. As an organisation we are committed to supporting all our staff affected by the menopause. We have been delivering menopause awareness sessions and are currently looking at ways to develop online learning that all staff can access. Some staff face barriers in recognising how they may be affected by the menopause and how they may offer support or be supported within the workplace.

The Occupational Health team delivered two Menopause Awareness sessions for staff in 2022-23 to help increase understanding and encourage open conversation about menopause. We recognise that by raising awareness and offering support and acceptance, the sessions can contribute to a more inclusive workplace.

Staff that attended found the café to be a welcoming place and were comfortable to share experiences. We are planning future events for 2023 and are currently

considering holding them at different council sites such as the Dock Offices or Alps to reach as many staff as possible. We have also offered support to schools in setting up sessions for school-based staff.

We are working hard as an organisation to address what we can do to support our staff in a meaningful way around menopause. Our procedural guidelines are currently under review, and we are aiming to achieve The Menopause Friendly Accreditation in recognition of what we offer in awareness, education, and support.

Integrated Autism Service

The Integrated Autism Service is a multiagency team of local authority and health staff covering the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan area. We provide diagnosis and support for adults with autism. We deliver preventative services and support that meet the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2010.

We gather information about available services which come from local authorities, external service providers, and third-sector organisations. We then support clients to access these services and provide more targeted support if there are barriers. Without this low-level support, clients may not be aware of support opportunities or how to access these services.

The Integrated Autism Service's short-term targeted interventions encourage people to be independent and not to become dependent on the team. Appointments are held virtually and in-person. We also offer support through a virtual Advice Hub.

We also run a range of groups, including:

- A monthly adult hub meeting;
- A post diagnostic group where adults learn about the condition and how it may affect their lives;
- A social skills communication workshop; and
- Groups concerned with mindfulness and healthy lifestyles

This year we have worked with colleagues from Human Resources, Equalities and Communities for Work to help improve recruitment practices and working conditions for staff with disabilities and autism. We also produced an article for Staffnet about the experiences of a member of staff who was recently diagnosed with autism.

Vale 50+ Strategy Forum

The Forum speaks up for the needs of people aged fifty and over in the Vale of Glamorgan. Members are in contact with many local and national working groups. The Forum works closely with the Council to ensure that the interests and welfare of older people are considered. They also receive financial and administrative support from the Council.

A program of meetings and events is held throughout the year and the Forum also readily participates in consultation and engagement activities.

The Forum has an Executive Committee and sub-groups covering transport, health and social care, housing, race equality, arts and leisure, and climate change. The transport group has been preparing a response to a Welsh Government consultation highlighting both national and Value issues for older people in accessing transport services. Similarly, the health and social care group has been focussing on access to health care including GPs, dental, optical, podiatry, and hearing services. The University Health Board is refreshing its strategy for the next five years and our work is feeding into that. We are also contributing to the Welsh Government's work on social care provision, which will be a live issue over the coming years. There are also specific issues in the Vale with which we are involved, such as establishing "wellbeing hubs" and services in more rural parts of the Vale.

The Vale 50+ Strategy Forum work closely with the Age Friendly Vale Officer who was appointed in 2022. They have held a number of information and social events across the Vale including a Festive Get Together at Christmas in the Civic Offices and a Have Your Say open meeting focussed on the cost-of-living crisis.

Data analysis

During 2022-23, we have progressed a number of workstreams to provide advice and training to services on data analysis. Following the release of the first data from the 2021 Census in Autumn-Winter 2022/23, we produced a [report](#) analysing the results for the Vale of Glamorgan. Alongside the publication of the detailed report, we have presented briefings on the results to Cabinet, the Strategic Leadership team, the Heads of Service network, the Insight Board, the Human Resources Directorate Team, and Corporate Resources Colleagues.

We have also used the results of the Census to inform the refresh and re-launch of the Public Services Board's Evidence Base. This builds on the findings of the Well-being Assessment and subsequent insight into people's well-being. The refreshed Evidence Base is constructed of a suite of four individual reports which together form the PSB Evidence Base. These include the [Demographic Change Report](#), the [Education and Economy Report](#), The [Health and Communities Report](#) and the [Environment and Transport Report](#). The Evidence Base will provide colleagues with up-to-date data and evidence to inform decision making and to support policy development.

During 2022-23 we established the Public Participation Practitioners Network which brings together colleagues who engage in consultation and engagement activities across the organisation to share learning and best practice. In March 2023, we delivered a presentation to the network on Data and Insight. This presentation was designed to raise awareness of how colleagues can use data and insight to support their work, to inform of how data analysis can be supported across the organisation, and to raise awareness of opportunities for the sharing of data and insight across the organisation.

Leisure Services – Vale Sports and Play

The Healthy Living Team (Sports Development) held a School Sport survey. As a result of the findings of the survey, the Active Young People team have developed new partnerships to ensure disabled young people have more opportunities to access sport and physical activity. Over 4,200 pupils aged 7 to 16 completed the

National School Sport Survey to highlight physical activity levels, barriers, and challenges faced, and what they wanted to do to become more active.

Here are some of the projects and impacts as a result of the findings:

- We developed new and additional extracurricular sessions within secondary schools impacting on 931 pupils across at least 3055 participations.
- We worked with the Youth Service to address inequalities in participation through more 'informal' sport for the least active. New and additional community sessions reached 468 least active young people.
- We organised festivals and taster sessions with local clubs in primary schools enabling around 4,500 pupils to try new opportunities with basketball, dance, cricket, gymnastics, martial arts, tennis, running, and football.
- We delivered Sports Leaders Playmakers training to some Key Stage 2 pupils to enable them to facilitate peer led breaktime activities. As a result, 218 pupils in years 5/6 have been trained. Schools have observed increased physical activity levels and improvements in playground behaviour.
- We developed a 'youth takeover' event at Penarth Leisure Centre working with Legacy Leisure and the Youth Service. 67 young people registered to take part. 93% wanted to continue to take part in leisure centre activities.
- We provided training to 151 coaches to develop more community activities and help more children become more active.
- We continue to target schools with high Entitled to Free School Meals (eFSM) rates to help narrow the inequality gap. We worked with the play team and other partners to deliver the Summer of Fun program of activities.

- We established the Young Ambassador program. Young Ambassadors are in years 7 and 8. We work with them to deliver leadership training to primary school pupils and with school councils, to improve participation rates. Through the Young Ambassador program, at least 64 pupils have attended an extracurricular sports club who had not previously.
- 40% of young people indicated they wanted to do more swimming, with feedback telling us that existing free swim sessions were not attractive to their age group. We developed a weekly teen inflatable swim session with Legacy Leisure and provided a swim voucher scheme with three secondary schools. We saw 249 participations over a block of twelve new sessions, with at least 75 pupils supported to access swimming to increase activity levels.
- We developed weekly 'turn up and play' football sessions for 6 to 8 year olds, allowing over 30 children to access community football for the first time. We worked with Cardiff City Football in the Community to re-establish 'Kicks' football, an informal turn up and play weekly session for 11 to 17 year olds.
- We established basketball enrichment activity at a secondary school for the cluster primary schools to attend on a rota basis. 105 pupils have taken part. We have trained 12 new coaches to support more basketball opportunities.
- We have worked with the Active Travel and Road Safety teams to create a Vale-wide cycle forum with thirteen members. We developed opportunities for those with no access to bikes, securing funding for 17 bikes at one high school utilised by eFSM pupils during a summer program, and helped to create cycle trails so children have safe and accessible places to cycle.
- We collaborated with a local netball club to develop afterschool sessions impacting over 90 pupils, with 30 new players joining the club.
- We worked with a local golf club to reinstall a junior section that had dissolved during Covid. We helped the club work with schools to deliver taster sessions

and are pleased that the junior section is again thriving and developing facilities using a Be Active Grant.

We provided family-based physical activity sessions, targeting families where children did not already belong to a local sports club or families with low activity levels. 27% of participants said they had additional needs or disabilities. Sessions were provided at no cost to participants.

We also developed Vale on the Move community-based taster sessions with local clubs. We worked with schools and local organisations to ensure children and young people with additional needs accessed the sessions.

Following a referral through the Disability Health Pathway scheme, we worked with an autism resource base at a Vale secondary school to provide a separate timetable of extra-curricular provision. This has enabled young people at the resource base to overcome some of the identified barriers in accessing the school's enrichment program, such as noise related challenges.

In another secondary school, we used Active Young People funding to establish an archery club to provide a valuable inclusive opportunity within the school's extracurricular program for members of the Specialist Teaching Facility (TYFU) including visually impaired pupils. The club was nominated for the Participation Project of the Year Award through Archery UK in 2022.

Similarly, we worked with a resource base at a primary school to increase additional sports opportunities by improving flexibility to remove barriers. We worked with the school's Family Liaison Officer and three local clubs to deliver a series of sessions.

We have also continued to promote the Golden Fund, Golden Pass and Golden Activators projects throughout the Vale. One Golden Activator project took place in Peterston Super Ely in the Western Vale. A local resident initiated the project, which was funded through the Golden Fund element of the 60+ Active Leisure Scheme. Short Mat Bowls sessions were introduced in the village hall in Peterston Super Ely with an average of 20 people attending every week. The group were supported by

the 60+ lead within the Healthy Living Team to access the funding. The project has attracted older people into physical activity and has also helped with social isolation, with more people engaging with their local community.

Summer of Fun

Summer of Fun was a program of free play, sports, and cultural activities co-ordinated by the Health Living Team and delivered between July and September 2022 aimed at children and young people, and their families. Funding was provided by Welsh Government and the program aimed to support the mental, social, and physical wellbeing of children and young people in the context of recovery from Covid restrictions. The program was open to all children and young people across the Vale, but there was also a desire to engage those most affected by the cost-of-living crisis and Covid. As such, some targeted provision was provided.

The Healthy Living Team worked with 130 partner organisations to deliver over 147 different activities across 946 separate sessions in 23 different locations. There were over 19,500 attendees of which 433 were children with disabilities or illnesses, and more than 475 were children with additional needs. However, not all organisations recorded this data. Highest participation levels were amongst 5 –10-year-olds at 48% and lowest participation was amongst 16 – 24-year-olds at 7%. The low uptake of activities aimed at young people is an area that will need to be considered further if similar programs are run in the future. The promotion of activities may have contributed to low take-up amongst this age group.

Summer of Fun has been deemed a huge success, with positive feedback from 99% of participants about the activities delivered and staff delivering the activities. 79% of participants agreed sessions were 'great'.

LGBTQ+ Veterans Hub

The LGBTQ+ Veterans Hub was launched at Cardiff Castle Firing Line Museum in October 2022. The purpose of the hub is to allow veterans from the LGBTQ+ community a place to talk and use the group as a stepping-stone to joining one of their local Veteran Groups. When speaking to veterans, some felt they were not

ready to walk into a veteran group and some said they did not feel like a veteran. We are pleased to have the help of Fighting with Pride, who support the health and wellbeing of LGBT+ veterans, service personnel and their families.

Culture Book

Diversity, equality, and inclusion have become top priorities for employers. Building a culture of inclusion is now a necessity. At the Vale of Glamorgan Council, we understand how diversity, equality, and inclusion strategies have a significant and direct impact on employee attraction, engagement, and retention.

Our culture book seeks to support these strategies through stories that highlight best practice and our organisational values internally and externally. The culture book is both for staff and utilised as a recruitment tool.

We will be updating the book in 2023 to include the new disability network and refreshing the information about the other staff networks.

As the Culture Book is a living document, we make continuous updates. These reflect changes that happen within the organisation and that underpin our culture.

Our induction programme reinforces our organisational values and culture for new starters from the beginning of their employment journey with us. During the session the leader of the council joins us and discusses the value that a gender balanced council brings to the organisation. We advertise the many networks within the organisation and encourage new starters to get involved as much as possible.

Job Evaluation

We have a job evaluation scheme in place. This scheme is for staff paid under the Single Status collective agreement. It makes sure that there is a systematic way of deciding the pay and grade for a job. This results in equal pay for work of equal value. The results of job evaluation are linked to our pay and grading system. We put in place a formal pay and grading system in March 2012 following conclusion of an extensive job evaluation process.

It has helped us to pay people fairly and in a consistent way.

There are other factors that affect people's pay such as the type of jobs that they choose to do. Men and women often choose to do jobs that men and women have traditionally done. We call this occupational segregation. It often plays a part in there being a gap between the pay of men and women – a gender pay gap.

As part of our Workforce Plan, we continue to look for ways to reduce the gender pay gap. We think about the knowledge, skills, and experience people need to do the job. We also need to consider the impact of reorganising departments and finding new best practices to work. Using job evaluation helps keep pay and grading fair and consistent.

The Workforce Plan

We have a workforce plan. This plan makes sure that we have:

- the right people
- with the right skills
- in the right place
- at the right time

This helps us to continue to provide our services at a time when there are great financial challenges and increasing demand for our services. We plan to make sure

that the make-up of our workforce reflects the make-up of the local community in terms of protected groups. We are currently reviewing the Council's workforce plan.

We have put in place a way of recording the protected characteristics of our staff. This means we can compare our statistics with local and national statistics to see what progress we are making. We can then plan how to make improvements.

As part of the workforce plan, we have a strategy to look at increasing the diversity of our employees across all protected groups. As part of the strategy, we are building relationships and developing offerings with local education institutions, including Cardiff University, University of South Wales, and Cardiff and Vale College. We are striving to offer the full range of apprenticeships available in Wales.

Specified employment information, including information on training and pay

We have been collecting employment data for many years. We have developed new systems that let us report on more protected characteristics. We collect information on the following protected characteristics:

- gender;
- race;
- disability;
- age;
- sexual orientation;
- gender reassignment;
- gender identity;
- national identity;
- religion or belief; and
- marital status

We have used guidance from the Welsh Government. The name of the guidance is 'Collecting Equality Data: Harmonised Standards and Best Practice'.

We ask about protected characteristics when people apply for jobs with us.

We developed a staff survey and used this to ask staff about their protected characteristics.

We improved the way we record this information. Doing this helps to improve what we know about protected groups within our workforce.

We have looked at the information that we have collected. You can see what we have found out in [Appendix 5](#) of this report. Here is a summary of the headlines by protected characteristic. The following figures refer to corporate staff and do not include staff employed in schools.

Age

- We employ more people overall but the number of 25 - 29 year olds, 45 - 49 year olds, 50 – 54 year olds, and 55 – 59 year olds has decreased.
- The age range with the most employees is 55 - 59 years.
- The highest percentage of applications was from people in the 25 - 29 age band (15.7%). This has changed from 20 – 24 year olds last year (15.6%).
- The highest proportion of people attending training came from the 55 - 59 age group – 330 (5.7%).
- Most people who left were between 55 and 59 years of age, 12.4% of all leavers.
- All average salaries increased.
- People between 55 and 59 had the highest average salary, £31,345.

Disability

- 77.2% of our staff said they did not have a disability. 2.8% said they had a disability that limited them a little.
- The percentage of applicants who said they had no disability was 85.3%, an increase from 78.3% last year.
- 3.2% of people who attended training had a disability that limited them to some extent. 79.1% of people who attended training had no disability.
- The number of leavers who said they had no disability increased from 234 to 260 since the previous year, a percentage decrease from 78.5% to 71.6%.
- The average salary for all disability related options increased.

Marital Status

- The number of those who are married remains the highest category in marital status for employed staff at 43.0%, followed by single people at 35.6%
- Most applications were from single people, 43.7%, the same as last year.
- The number of applications from married people has increased from 779 to 1265, an increase from 23.7% to 36.4%
- The number of divorced and married leavers have increased but most leavers were single (39.7%).
- Average pay increased for all groups except for those who said they were in a civil partnership.

Maternity, Paternity, and Adoption

- There were 58 corporate employees who had maternity, paternity or adoption pay and leave during 2022/2023, a decrease from 63 last year.

National Identity

- Most employees said they were Welsh (1087) or British (1056).
- Over half of applicants said they were Welsh, 1781. This remains the highest identity for applicants at 51.3%.
- The highest national identity for leavers is Welsh, at 38.3% which has decreased from 42.6% last year.
- All groups apart from those who prefer not to say had an increase in average salary.

Race and Ethnicity

- Most employees were White - over 83%. The highest group was White and British, at 66.7%.
- White and British remains the highest category for applicants at 70.2%. 77.6% of people applying for jobs were White, less than the previous year (79%).
- The number of applicants choosing not to record their race or ethnicity has decreased to zero.
- Over 78% of leavers were White. There was an increase in the percentage of White and British leavers which remains the highest group at 58.7%.
- For people with White ethnic backgrounds, pay increased for those in eight out of the nine groups since the previous year.

Religion or Belief

- Most staff either had no religion (37.2%), did not record their religion or belief (28.6%), or said they were Christian (28.5%).
- Over half of all applicants stated that they had no religion (51.0%).
- Most employees who attend training say they have no religion (38.8%).
- Most leavers recorded no religion, 38.6% compared to 40.6% last year.

Gender

- Our corporate workforce was 66.3% female and 33.7% male. The number of female employees has decreased from 1793 to 1786 and the number of male employees has increased from 873 to 908.
- Most employees, both male and female, continued to work in permanent full-time jobs.
- Around 66% of people who attended training were women and around 33% were men. These percentages reflect the same proportion of males and females employed.
- Most people applying for jobs were female (60.8%). This is in comparison to 32.9% that were male.
- More women than men left their jobs. We would expect this as we employ more women than men.
- 49.3% of women and 39.1% of men held jobs paid between £15,000 - £19,999. 45.8% of all jobs are paid between £15,000 and £19,999 which is an increase on 27.3%, due to the pay increases awarded this year.
- Average pay for males remains the highest average salary. The average salary for male and females has increased, but more so for males.

Sexual Orientation

- Most of our staff said they were heterosexual (66.4%). The percentage of the workforce who said they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual has increased slightly from 2.5% to 2.7%. Our workforce increased by 1.05%.
- We monitor the success of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people from application to successful appointment. In 2022/23, the success rate for applicants was 25% compared to 14.6% in the previous year.
- The percentage of applicants who said they were heterosexual remains the highest (82.8%).
- Over 62% of leavers were heterosexual.
- 39% of LGBTQ+ employees were employed in the salary band £20,000 - £29,999.

Welsh Language

- The percentage of our staff saying they have no Welsh language skills has increased from 15.3% to 34.5% this year. These percentages are based on the average of the 'none' option for understanding, speaking, reading, and writing.
- The percentage of staff with Welsh language skills rated between Basic and Fluent have decreased but remain between one-fifth and two-fifths: understanding 22.6%; speaking 22.9%; reading 16.9%; and writing 12.8%.
- Welsh language skills for applicants were as follows: understanding 44.6%; speaking 39.4%; reading 36.0%; and writing 30.2%.
- We still receive most applications from people who say they have no Welsh language skills.

We will continue with this work. We want to be able to report on all protected characteristics.

We do not have all the information that we need to collect to meet the general and specific duties. The reasons for this are:

- reporting systems need further updating;
- some staff choose not to disclose personal information;
- extra and up-to-date data on protected characteristics needs to be collected;
- limited guidance meant we had to clarify what we had to report on.

We have improved our data on Welsh language. We intend to survey staff in 2023/24 to get up to date information on Welsh language skills.

Even when we make improvements, we may not get the information we need. We think some people choose not to tell us about some of their protected characteristics.

We encourage people to do so by explaining:

- why we are asking for this information; and
- how we can use it to better meet their needs.

The information for this report comes from systems in Human Resources. This means that the information is as correct and complete as possible. We know that we will need to continue to work on this information for future reports. This will help us meet the requirements of the general duty.

Review of the Strategic Equality Plan 2020 - 2024

The current strategic equality objectives are for the period 2020 to 2024. There is a statutory requirement in Wales to review Strategic Equality Plans no less than every four years so we will need to have a reviewed plan in place in 2024. As part of this review, we will report on how we have met our current objectives and decide whether we need to change them or further develop them.

We have linked the current Strategic Equality Plan to the corporate wellbeing objectives in our Corporate Plan and used the Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Is Wales Fairer 2018?' research to shape our strategic equality objectives. We have translated our equality duties into local action by showing how we will work together for a fairer future.

Current corporate wellbeing objectives	How our strategic equality objectives link
To work with and for our communities.	Identifies the communities who are most disadvantaged as shown in 'Is Wales Fairer 2018' and through local engagement.
To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth.	Supports learning and employment for people with protected characteristics, focusing on those who are most disadvantaged.
To support people at home and in their community.	Supports the safety and well-being of people at home and in their community, with particular regard to people with protected characteristics identified as

	disadvantaged in 'Is Wales Fairer 2018' and our own local information and data.
To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment.	Ensures our local environment can be enjoyed by a diverse range of people, including disabled people.

We will not be reviewing our Corporate Plan and its objectives until 2025. It is likely that the Equality and Human Rights will not publish its research on whether Wales is fairer soon enough to properly inform our equality objectives. This means that we may wish to review our Strategic Equality Plan for 2024 – 2028 again in 2025 to assure ourselves that it aligns with the latest research and the Council's Corporate Plan for 2025 – 2030

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