



Strategic Equality Plan

Annual Report 2016-17

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Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2016-17

We are pleased to present Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual Report for 2016-17 detailing the implementation of our Strategic Equality Plan. As a Council, we recognise the value of diversity in our county and we are proud of the work that has been done so far. Nevertheless, we recognise that there is more work to be done and we look forward to developing partnerships with our communities and with the protected groups in order to learn more.

Strategic Equality Plans (SEPs) are important documents that set out how public bodies will consider the needs of groups with 'protected characteristics', as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. This is intended to ensure that all individuals receive just and equitable treatment in respect of service delivery and strategy/policy formulation.

As a key employer in the county, we have made the transition from the Disability Two Ticks Scheme to being a Disability Confident Employer. **As a Disability Confident Employer we:**

- have undertaken and successfully completed the Disability Confident self-assessment
- are taking all of the core actions to be a Disability Confident employer
- are offering at least one activity to get the right people for our business and at least one activity to keep and develop our people.

I am pleased to say that further enhancements have been made to ensure the **accessibility of the Council's website**. Around 20% of the population have reading difficulties (due to dyslexia, learning difficulties or mild visual impairments). For this reason, we have added **Browse Aloud** software to the corporate site, which enables users to listen to web content in English or Welsh.

It has also been a productive year, advancing fairness in partnership with community groups.

As an Executive Board, we have a dedicated Disability Champion, which is Cllr. Jane Tremlett. During the year we have established the Carmarthenshire Disability Partnership, with members of the **Carmarthenshire Disability Coalition for Action**. Our aim is to discuss key issues and ensure that the Coalition are involved at the early stages of service planning and delivery and that we as an Authority support the group to develop further expertise and knowledge. I look forward to seeing this partnership develop further in the future.

We continue to host a **Community Cohesion Co-ordinator** who co-ordinates the Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan. We also continue to host Equality Carmarthenshire as a group of organisations who represent the protected characteristics and a range of public service providers.

To end, I want to report on arrangements for consulting on the **Council's budget**. It is well known that budget pressures are intensifying over the coming years. I am firmly committed to making sure that, as far as is possible, budget reductions are fair to all groups.

In view of this, arrangements were put in place to consult widely, including with the 50+ Forum and others on which Council services were considered most important. Later in the process, a **budget consultation survey** was developed and all sectors of the community were encouraged to take part. This included representatives of Equality Carmarthenshire. The survey asked people demographic profiling questions, meaning that the views of people from different groups could be understood separately. In summary, this activity helped ensure fairness was integral to the Council's budget decisions.

We have worked closely with other public bodies in the development of the Plan, and we look forward to building on this good work. In the same way, we are eager to learn more from the groups in our county who work tirelessly to raise awareness and celebrate diversity.

Naturally, our legal duties are central to all planning and delivery of services, and our workforce has a key role to play in promoting diversity and addressing unfairness.

Councillor Linda Evans
Executive Board Member (Equalities)

Section 1 - Introduction

1.1 Introduction and background

Public Sector Equality Duties

The General Duty

The aim of the General Duty is to ensure that public authorities and those who carry out a public function consider how they can positively contribute to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in their day-to-day activities.

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

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

Specific duties in Wales

The Equality Act 2010 made provision for Welsh Ministers to be able to make regulations that place specific public sector equality duties on relevant Welsh public authorities listed in Part 2 of Schedule 19 of the Act.

The duties have been developed to be proportionate in design, relevant to need, transparent in approach and tailored to guide relevant Welsh public authorities towards better performance of the general duty. The ambition is to better meet the needs of the citizens of Wales relying on the services provided to them by the public sector.

The Specific Duties in Wales are set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and came into force on 6 April 2011 and note that the listed bodies will undertake and develop the following requirements:

- Objectives
- Strategic Equality Plans
- Engagement
- Assessing Impact
- Equality information
- Employment information
- Pay differences
- Staff training
- Procurement
- Annual reporting (by Public Authorities and Welsh Ministers)

- Publishing
- Review
- Accessibility

Carmarthenshire County Council

Carmarthenshire County Council published its second Strategic Equality Plan in April 2016 and this review brought an opportunity to look at what has been achieved and to look anew at our priorities as a Council.

Our complaints and compliments procedure is also key to ensuring better services. We will ensure that any complaint, compliment or comment regarding equality is recorded as those relating to equality and we will monitor the situation and report on progress in dealing with them. We intend to strengthen these links and we will ensure that communities, key stakeholders and individuals / groups that represent one or more of the protected characteristics are aware of our procedure.

The Policy and Partnerships team works closely with the People Management Division and all council departments to promote the Strategic Equality Plan and to continue to gather evidence which will contribute to the work. The team also works closely with stakeholders over the county, and meet regularly with groups such as the Carmarthenshire Disability Coalition and Equality Carmarthenshire.

1.2 Any other information relevant to meeting the duties

Our role as an Employer

Time to Change Wales

Time to Change Wales is the first national campaign to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems. The campaign is needed because although mental health problems are very common, it can still be a taboo subject. People who experience mental illness often face stigma and discrimination in the workplace, socially and within families. This can make life with a mental health problem more difficult than the symptoms themselves. The aim is to improve knowledge and understanding about mental illness and, most importantly of all, get people talking about mental health.

The Occupational Health Team lead on our corporate commitment to the national campaign and have hosted various awareness campaigns such as the 'Time to Talk Day' and the Pledge Cards with the Chief Executive and Elected Members.

Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Policy

The Council recognises that its employees, men or women, will be amongst those affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence, either as victims/survivors of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence; friends, family or colleagues of victims/survivors; or perpetrators of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence. We have prepared and published a Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Policy, which is

available to view in the HR Policies and Guidance Section of the intranet, via line managers, Trade Union Representatives or the Occupational Health Unit. Carmarthenshire County Council is committed to ensuring that any member of staff disclosing domestic abuse and/or sexual violence will be listened to and supported.

The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 is a landmark law, the first of its kind in the UK. One of the key mechanisms for delivering the Act in Wales is to ensure that everyone working in Welsh Public Service is aware the nature and impact on those affected by this whatever their gender.

The Learning and Development team have ensured access to the mandatory Welsh Government e-learning module on Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence for all staff. This e-learning provides awareness of the issues and importantly provides an understanding about how staff might help in tackling them.

The Corporate Management Team were committed to ensuring that every part of our workforce has the opportunity to receive the awareness training with alternative arrangements being made available for those who cannot access e-learning. Additional training was also provided for those undertaking professional/specialist roles.

Our role as a provider of services

Wales Interpretation and Translation Service

The authority is a partner in the Welsh Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS). This body acts as a “one-stop-shop” designed to improve access to public services for vulnerable people whose first language may not be English or Welsh. WITS provides the Authority with access to trained, accredited, fully security vetted translators and interpreters covering approximately 135 languages.

Inequalities in Education

The eligibility for Free School Meals (e-fsm) along with information in relation to Looked After Children (LAC) are key measures used by the Welsh Government as indicators of pupil deprivation. There is evidence that eligibility for free school meals impacts on a child’s attainment at school. E-fsm pupils are 2.5 times less likely to get A*-C grades in core subjects than their ineligible peers. Eligibility for free school meals also has a relationship with school attendance.

All schools are required to publish **Equality Objectives** and a **Strategic Equality Plan** that records how the school is responding to equality issues. The purpose of the objectives and plan is to enable the delivery of measurable equality outcomes which improve the lives of individuals and communities.

Schools access and have to evidence how they utilise the **Pupil Development Grant (PDG)**. The PDG is the Welsh Government's means of providing additional financial support for e-fsm learners and to address the three national priorities:

- improving standards in literacy;
- improving standards in numeracy, and
- Reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment.

Schools have to develop strategies for the use of PDG and report on its impact on the e-fsm group of learners. In 2016/17 the PDG entered its fourth year and equates to £1,150 per pupil.

Carmarthenshire Minority Ethnic Achievement Service (MEAS)

This year we have seen only a small rise in our English/Welsh as an Additional Language (EAL/WAL) population. We currently have in excess of 1200 EAL learners on our register and support 400+ A-C Stage learners in 40 schools throughout Carmarthenshire. This year we have been able to increase our support in Welsh medium schools.

The MEAS team currently consists of 4 EAL Specialist Teachers, 2 Polish Bilingual TAs and 3 Arabic Bilingual TAs who work with refugee children and their families.

Carmarthenshire Traveller Achievement Service

This year the service has been able to support 6 secondary schools and 7 primary schools. We currently have 171 children on our register, not all of whom are currently receiving support.

There has been an overall improvement with attendance from Traveller children over the past year. This has impacted slightly on improving their attainment levels in primary schools.

Stonewall Education Champions

Stonewall's Education Champions programme provides support and guidance to local authorities in tackling homophobia and homophobic bullying in their local schools. The Education Champions programme has been developed following the huge success of Stonewall's [Diversity Champions programme](#).

The Education & Children's Services Department are members of the programme and will work with Stonewall to establish ways in which we can address homophobic bullying and promote a safe and inclusive learning environment for all young people.

Housing Related Support Service – Housing Services have developed a new Housing support service for people over the age of 55 and people with dementia irrelevant of age. This will be across tenure (private or public) and be given where the need for housing related support has been identified.

If someone has housing support needs they will receive support irrelevant of whether they are a Carmarthenshire County Council tenant or not. This will be a much fairer service, extending to those who are home owners or private tenants'. The service will be a floating support service for Older People which will provide

housing related support to enable people to develop the skills and confidence needed to live independently in their own homes.

Assisted waste collection

There are over a 1,000 people currently receiving our assisted waste collection service and the scheme is widely publicised in the Easy Guide to Recycling Rubbish (sent to every household) and Carmarthenshire News.

Assistance can be given with blue bag and food waste recycling and help with bulky waste is also available for qualifying people.

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) works – highways and walking/cycling routes

Dropped crossings incorporating DDA features, such as tactile paving have been installed at over 430 locations across the County. Further work is on-going as part of normal footway / highway maintenance schemes. Safer Routes in Communities schemes are DDA compliant where possible (steep gradients being the exception) with the introduction of additional accessibility features on some routes.

Library Services

During the year, Carmarthenshire Libraries have held drop in sessions to help people with sight loss to go online.

From June to December the RNIB delivered the sessions in order to support people with sensory loss. The project 'Online Today', offers advice and guidance on technology, and helping people to develop skills and confidence in using technology.

To make the best use of these drop in sessions and to support the RNIB's campaign of MANIL (Making Noise in Libraries) 2016, Carmarthenshire Libraries demonstrated the numerous free audio visual services provided.

Our role as a Community Leader

Syrian Resettlement Programme in Carmarthenshire

Carmarthenshire County Council is committed to welcoming 60 households over a five year period from April 2016. Council members voted unanimously in favour of participating in the Home Office scheme in autumn 2015, and this has received firm backing of Executive Board.

The scheme is co-ordinated by a multi-agency steering group, which meets monthly. Chaired by the Executive Board Member for Housing and Equalities, it has high-level representation from Hywel Dda Local Health Board, Education, Housing, Dyfed Powys Police, Communities First, Job Centre, Coleg Sir Gâr, Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services, the Project Manager and our support agency, Ethnic Youth Support Team.

The Council sources suitable homes through our in-house social lettings agency, Simple Lettings. The properties are all well-maintained, carpeted and decorated to a high standard by the property owner. Furnishing is paid for by the Council, but arranged by the support agency. Rents are paid at Local Housing Allowance level. Simple Lettings charges a management fee from this, and the remainder is passed on to the property owner. Simple Lettings arranges minor repairs, heating maintenance and so on once the tenant is in the property.

So far, 14 families have arrived in Carmarthenshire, with a total of 66 family members, which are in Llanelli (6), Ammanford (1), Llandeilo (1), Pontyberem (2), Kidwelly (1) and Carmarthen (3). We are on target to deliver Carmarthenshire's pledge of resettling 60 families.

The Coleg Sir Gâr representative also represents Syria Sir Gâr, a voluntary support group which has been set up to provide informal support to the refugee families, which is over and above what can be provided through the Home Office scheme. Syria Sir Gâr has held open meetings in areas where refugees are about to arrive. This allows members of the local community to ask about how the scheme works and to have their questions answered in a relatively informal setting. It also informs local people about how they can get involved in supporting the families.

This has proved very successful, with Syria Sir Gâr being able to put out a call for things that are needed by the families, such as a bicycle for a teenager, or homework support after school.

Welsh Government 'Welcome to Wales' packs have been provided to all the families in Arabic and English, and in adult and child-friendly versions. Carmarthenshire has also provided a local supplement in Arabic and English, which covers the basics about local services and how to access them.

Carmarthenshire has set up and delivered an effective support system for the Syrian families, and is well-placed to meet our commitment of receiving 60 families within five years. We have compensated for a lack of experience in this area of work by bringing all the relevant agencies together, and a willingness to learn from others. Our success to date has been recognised by mentions in recent reports by Welsh Government and the British Academy

Community Cohesion

A Regional Community Cohesion Co-ordinator was funded by Welsh Government from the Community Cohesion Fund to work with Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Powys and Pembrokeshire County Councils.

The Co-ordinator facilitates the regional implementation of the Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan and creates numerous links with organisations working across the region. During the year we have been able to access learning and development opportunities, focusing on Hate Crime awareness.

Victim Support held sessions with a group of staff and focussed on increasing knowledge of the protected groups and ensuring that staff understood some of the barriers faced by victims.

The session looked at the definitions of the protected groups covered by the hate crime legislation and the definition of a hate crime, but went into further details about the issues / barriers or challenges faced by those groups.

During these sessions, there was a greater emphasis on Mate Crime and assisting participants develop a few new skills when working with victims who have a learning difficulty, so that the victim's voice is heard.

Equality Carmarthenshire is a group of organisations who represent the protected characteristics of the Equalities Act and local service providers.



During the year, Equality Carmarthenshire has developed and promoted a “More in Common” campaign and have taken to the streets to promote the message that we all have More In Common with a series of stalls in Llanelli, Ammanford and Carmarthen.

The campaign is part of a national effort to stop the escalation of Hate Crime which has been seen in the aftermath of the Brexit vote. Although Carmarthenshire didn't see an increase in reports of rising hate crime that have been seen in other parts of the country, it is important that we are not complacent. The aim was to promote a positive message that we are all equally valued and we all have a part to play in our community.

Equality Carmarthenshire also hosted a consultation meeting on the Carmarthenshire Wellbeing Assessment consultation, supported by the Carmarthenshire Public Services Board (PSB). This was an opportunity for the members to discuss what well-being means to people and an opportunity to input to the Assessment consultation which helped identify what matters most to people in Carmarthenshire. The forum will continue to be involved with the development of the Well-being Objectives and Well-being Plan, with regular updates from the Policy and Partnership Team at meetings.

Carmarthenshire Disability Coalition

The Council continues to support the work of the Coalition and benefits from its feedback and advice. For instance, work has been undertaken to improve the accessibility of information, this includes work to ensure that the Council's website is fully accessible to screenreader software, electronic documents are now published in single language versions and improvements have been made to the format of printed letters to help accessibility. As a further example, the Coalition are working with our leisure section on designing works to improve the accessibility of paths at Pembrey Country Park. Relationships between the Council and the Coalition have been enhanced through bi-monthly meetings between the Executive Board Member for Disabilities, Cllr Jane Tremlett, and the Chair and key officers from the Coalition.

50+ Forum

The 50+ Forum participated in the SEP consultation and has made a considerable contribution to the Council's Ageing Well Plan, through supporting the consultation and championing the Plan.

Section 2 - Identifying, collecting and using relevant information

2.1 Our communities

Statistical background

Carmarthenshire has an estimated population of 184,681 and a population density (population count/area in sq km) of 78 people per square km. The County is very diverse and rural. It consists of 58 Electoral Wards with 74 Elected Members. Demographic Profiles have been produced of each of the Electoral Wards and for the County which provides a picture of life in the individual communities as well as valuable local information. The profiles will give you information such as:

- Population Statistics
- Population density
- Birth and Death rate
- 2011 Census Data
- Housing Information

The [Ward Profiles](#) can be accessed through the corporate website.

Statistical information provides us with a useful baseline of information; however, the Census results do not provide information on all protected characteristics.

As a local authority, we are able to access a wealth of data. Our key aim during the preparation of the evidence report was to identify data to support the General Duty in:

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

2.2 Our staff

Carmarthenshire County Council has been collecting employment data for a number of years, on the groups required at the time. Our Workplace Profile Report can be viewed on our corporate website. Following the publication of Equality Act 2010 and the Specific Duties for Wales 2011, the People Management division have been working to update our recruitment monitoring forms and our Resource Link software, in order to collect the new data on the wider protected characteristics. This is a continuous process.

Section 3 – Equality Impact Assessments

Equality Impact Assessments

Equality Impact Assessments are a key element of the Strategic Equality Plan and objectives and are integral to all budgetary, policy and strategy decisions. Heads of Service and Budget Managers are required to complete an assessment of all policy decisions as part of the Priority Based Budgeting decisions and all assessments. It is also key that assessments are undertaken as part of all policy and strategy developments and that the Organisational Change template is completed when there are HR considerations.

During the year, the Policy and Partnership Team have been leading on the preparation of a draft Integrated Assessment. This is due to the fact that the Council has a statutory requirement to complete impact assessments under a number of new and existing legislation.

These requirements are legal obligations for the Council and failure to meet these duties may result in the Council being exposed to legal challenge.

This integrated assessment incorporates the requirements of the following Acts into one Impact Assessment:

- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010
- Welsh Language Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) & Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011
- Environment (Wales) Act 2016 – Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty

Section 4 – Training

The Council's Learning and Development Team prepare an annual Learning & Development Plan which outlines all the training and development opportunities available - including Equality and Diversity opportunities. Line Managers are required to discuss learning and development opportunities as part of staff appraisal and ensure that staff have opportunities to develop professionally. All new members of staff are required to complete “Engaging Diversity”, an on-line learning module within six months of appointment. All Managers and Senior Managers are required to attend the Dignity at Work training and, if involved in recruitment activities, Recruitment and Selection Training.

Section 5 – Procurement arrangements

Procurement arrangements

The Policy and Partnership Team work closely with the Procurement Unit to ensure compliance. One of the key documents is the Supplier Qualification Information Database (SQuID). This Information is a template provided by the Value Wales Division of the Welsh Government.

The SQuID has been designed to simplify and standardise the selection stage of procurement whilst improving transparency. This approach also makes it easier for small businesses to tender for public sector contracts. Information in relation to Equalities is included in the SQuID documents and all potential suppliers must complete the section. The SQuID template specifically asks prospective suppliers for information in relation to any findings of unlawful discrimination by an Employment Tribunal, an Employee Appeal Tribunal, or any other court and/or any complaints upheld following an investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission or its predecessors (or comparable body in any jurisdiction other than the UK) on grounds of alleged unlawful discrimination. The guidance clearly notes that any prospective suppliers, who hold any findings against them, will not be selected to tender, unless they have provided adequate evidence that they have taken appropriate action to stop it happening again.

Section 6 – Contact details

For further information on Carmarthenshire County Council's Strategic Equality Plan, please contact the

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