



Neath Port Talbot Council **Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024** Annual Report 2022-2023

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Cymraeg

This document is also available in Welsh



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

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Introduction

This annual report, published in accordance to The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, provides an overview of our work in developing the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024, meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty. This annual report also sets out progress against the six equality objectives and associated actions set out in the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Progress against our equality objectives and associated actions is predominantly reported on the above annual basis, however, there are instances where academic years and other time periods are reported, all of which are indicated.

Developments during 2022-2023

➤ Integrated Impact Assessments

Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs) continue to be carried out as part of policy/service development. As a public body we must consider ‘relevant evidence in order to understand the likely or actual effect of policies and practices on people with different protected characteristics’ (Assessing Impact and the Equality Duty: A Guide for Listed Public Authorities in Wales Equality and Human Rights Commission 2014).

Three audits were undertaken during 2021-2022; by our internal audit service, an external consultant and Audit Wales. The audits were to consider the completion of and compliance with legislation surrounding Integrated Impact Assessments, the quality of the assessments undertaken and the way that public bodies undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) and what impact this has on decision making respectively.

The recommendations from each of these Audits have informed an action plan which has been developed to help further improve our assessment process. We have made progress in implementing the action plan since its introduction but recognise there is a long way to go to fully realise the benefits it can bring to our process.

➤ Engagement

This continues to be a key feature of policy/service development; through coproduction, active engagement at an early stage of policy development to consultation on draft and final versions of strategies and plans, and is intrinsically linked to our Integrated Impact Assessment process. The continued involvement of our residents, local businesses and partners in policy development is key to the success of our policies, plans and strategies.

➤ Participation Strategy

We are ‘committed to fostering a culture of partnership with local people and communities, encouraging and supporting them to participate in our decision making, and keeping them informed about how their participation has influenced decisions.’ (Public Participation Strategy 2023-2028). We recognise that engaging with people and communities, rather than making assumptions about what people think, want and feel, produces better outcomes - both for us and the people we serve.

In producing our Participation Strategy we have been mindful of our obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Developments during 2022-2023

Not only does the Strategy set out how our communities can engage in the development of services and policies but also raises awareness of and provides information as to further participation in local democracy. It recognises the need to make engagement/ participation accessible to all as well as the contribution that all our communities can make, for example the NPT Youth Council who champion Children’s Rights by empowering young people to have a say and influence change in decisions affecting their lives.

➤ **Citizens’ Panel**

Launched in January 2020, the panel is currently made up of more than 500 residents from across the county borough and actively involves them in decision making at a very early stage, so they help shape proposals before these go out to wider public consultation. We continue to recruit to the Panel to ensure it remains representative of the area.

➤ **Community of Practice**

We have continued to utilise this group of council staff who have well established links into our communities and local groups to help with engagement activities, most notably the Public Services Board Well-being Plan 2023-2028.



Equalities in Employment

The [Equalities in Employment](#) information, for the period 2022-2023 was presented to Personnel Committee on 11 December 2023. The data included is for the 12-month period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, or where more appropriate, a snapshot of the workforce on 31 March 2022.

Our [gender pay gap report](#), a snapshot as at 31 March 2023, sets out the difference between the average pay of the men and women who work in the council in 2020. The pay data has been taken as at 31 March 2023 with a council workforce of 4,072 employees which represents 1,431 (35%) males and 2,641 (65%) females. (The pay data excludes casual employees and all school employees.)

- ➔ The mean gender pay gap in 2022 was 4.56% while in 2023 this figure decreased to 3.67%
- ➔ The median gender pay gap in 2022 was 3.56% while in 2023 our median gender pay gap decreased to 3.28%.
- ➔ The median gender pay gap is significantly below the UK national average median gender pay gap of 14.3% in 2023.

Whilst our gender pay gap is much lower than the UK's median gender pay gap (14.3%), we remain committed to closing the gap.



Education

To Ensure Children and Young People Are The Best They Can Be

Priority 1.1 - All Children and Young People will have improved levels of attainment

Action 4.5.4.01

We will work with schools to identify those children who require specific support at foundation phase and key stages.

Progress 2022 - 2023

A working group has been established to ensure schools are fulfilling their statutory responsibility in relation to meeting the needs of learners with additional learning needs (ALN) throughout early years and foundation phase.

We have ensured there is additional staffing capacity across Early Years Inclusion Teams to ensure that the needs of learners with ALN starting school have their needs identified and that where appropriate, statutory plans (IDPs) are in place and provision is secured.

We continue to work with our partners within Health to ensure that children's needs are identified early and suitable support and provision is in place.

We have established mechanisms for sharing information with schools regarding pupils likely to be transitioning to them.

Action 4.5.4.02

We will provide targeted support to families in need, including Armed Forces families, to reduce the potential for children to have an adverse childhood experience

Progress 2022 - 2023

Working with the Regional Service Liaison Officer (RSLO) from the organisation Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE), our Vulnerable Learners Service (VLS) arranged drop in centres for Armed Forces families to meet and develop networks within the area.

Priority 1.1 - All Children and Young People will have improved levels of attainment

Training sessions were delivered to teachers to help increase their understanding of the barriers that service children face in education as well as understanding the support needed to address any mental wellbeing issues. These sessions are to cease when the grant funding ends in September 2023.

30 service children across five schools participated in activities as part of the 2022 Armed Forces Festival schools. The VLS facilitated SoFit Mental Health workshops for 62 service children in four schools.

Action 4.5.4.03

We will continue to work with schools and other relevant settings to support and provide access to work experience, training and professional development opportunities for those who are at risk of becoming not in education employment or training (NEETs) post 16

Progress 2022 - 2023

A Community Renewal Fund funded Next Steps project was successfully piloted with Cwmtawe Community School. 219 Year 10 pupils took up work experience placements during June 2022. A Skill Week was also held; NPT College Group attended to talk to young people about the college offer and various employers came into the school to talk to the pupils about employment and the world of work. Information on the Next Steps pilot work placements will hopefully be used as part of continuing and expanding the work experience offer out to all schools.

The Legacy and post 16 teams (KIT and Next Steps) have supported young people to transition from school into post 16 destinations during quarter 2. The Next Steps provision continues to support post 16 young people although the Careers Wales work experience has now concluded with over 150 pupils taking part in the pilot in the academic year 2022-2023.

Work experience opportunities are being built into the shared prosperity fund for 2023-2024.

Priority 1.1 - All Children and Young People will have improved levels of attainment

Action 4.5.4.04

We will work with schools to ensure all pupils, particularly those from low-income families and those where COVID-19 has had particular impact, can access appropriate digital devices.

Progress 2022 - 2023

Through collaboration between schools and our IT Service, all digitally excluded school learners identified as needing support have been catered for with 1293 laptops provided.

Action 4.5.4.05

We will work with schools to identify those children who require enhanced non-academic support as a consequence of the impact of COVID-19 to help them to fulfil their potential

Progress 2022 - 2023

Our Youth Service Legacy Team continued to support pupils in year 11 identified by their schools and partners as being at risk of becoming NEET.

Sandfields West Children's Community worked with local schools to share information on the support available in the community, such as parenting techniques for behaviour issues, wellbeing of families and separation anxiety. During the year working groups were set up in local schools to identify children who could benefit from additional support/intervention.

Our Children & Families Team has continued to work closely with schools in the Upper Amman Valley to identify families who may need parenting support, as part of the Early Years Integration programme. Families are invited to drop in sessions and parenting courses delivered by the parenting worker and health visitor, encouraging participation in early help and support.

Priority 1.1 - All Children and Young People will have improved levels of attainment

Additional posts within the education directorate were established in order to help reduce persistent absenteeism and re-engage students back into education and to ensure that the needs of all elective home educated children and young people are catered for.

1,814 children and young people were referred to our Children and Families Team for early intervention support - 152 of the referrals were made by primary schools and 99 by secondary schools. Support provided by the Team included emotional health and wellbeing, youth work support, young carers, parenting, support for children with disabilities or an additional learning need (ALN).

Our Wellbeing Service have developed a trauma informed approach and relational health whole school training package. This has attracted significant focus since the pandemic and has received positive feedback from those schools who have received the training. As a result it was rolled out to all primary and secondary schools and increasing numbers have signed up for training.

Priority 1.2 - All children of school age will have Improved wellbeing and a greater sense of belonging

Action 4.5.4.06

We will continue to work with pupils, parents/carers and schools to reduce the number of instances of non-attendance and exclusions in all our schools

Progress 2022 - 2023

Work continues to support schools to increase levels of pupil attendance across primary and secondary age groups. Attendance rates continued to struggle during the year and although there was a slight increase on the previous year they remained lower than pre-pandemic attendance rates with 291 (Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) as at January 2023 children still being educated at home.

Action 4.5.4.07

We will continue to work with parents/carers of pre-school children to ensure that they are prepared for school

Progress 2022 - 2023

Over the year

- A range of courses have been developed and delivered which aim to teach parents strategies to support their child's communication
- We have held Stay and Play sessions to help build on children's resilience and socialisation skills ready for school
- Parents requiring one to parenting support have been given strategies to help support good routines, boundaries, behaviours and confidence, which will support children to start school and enjoy their learning experience.

For the year 2022-2023, we received £313,400 from the Welsh Governments' Child Development Fund to support pre-school children and their parents. Between April 2022 and March 2023 this funding helped provide 1,197 sessions (i.e. – engagements, home visits, events, telephone support calls and training courses) were delivered for the benefit of 3,549 children and families. Part of the funding has been utilised to support local community groups to deliver early years activities across the county, with 10 organisations receiving funding.



Priority 1.2 - All children of school age will have Improved wellbeing and a greater sense of belonging

At the end of June 2022, approximately 1,000 children were active for the Childcare Offer and able to access funded childcare for children aged 3 and 4 years. This figure decreased to 619 in September (a likely consequence of the start of full time school) before rising again (631) at the end of March 2023.

Action 4.5.4.08

We will collect data from schools and support schools to address bullying and harassment in all its forms and work with them to address trends/issues.

Progress 2022 - 2023

The local authority commenced work with schools to identify a means to capture the required data; however, it became apparent there were a number of different mechanisms and system used within schools that made a universal data capture exercise far more complex. A pilot exercise was undertaken in a small number of schools, however, this demonstrated the need for significant officer input to manually coordinate the task, therefore, an alternative method was required to be considered.

During the same period Estyn published its report “We don’t tell our teachers - Experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales’. As a result of this Welsh Government asked schools and local authorities to draft a responsive action plan to record data sets relating to sexual harassment. Officers, have, therefore, dovetailed the two measures together and are working with colleagues in IT to simplify a data capture exercise through the SIMS system that is used in most schools. This work is ongoing and a further pilot will commence shortly.



Priority 1.2 - All children of school age will have Improved wellbeing and a greater sense of belonging

Action 4.5.4.09

We will work with schools and other relevant settings to support pupils who are victims of bullying and work with perpetrators of bullying

Progress 2022 - 2023

Progress has been piecemeal primarily due to the issues experienced with data collection (see above). However, in response to data that has been made available training for school staff and young people is being sourced.

Action 4.5.4.10

We will continue to work with schools and other relevant settings to ensure that their learning environments are safe and nurturing, where there is respect and due regard to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Progress 2022 - 2023

We have drafted a set of principles and expectations for schools and partner agencies outlining responsibilities relating to inclusive learning environments.

Training has been delivered to schools, governors and partner agencies outlining duties relating statutory legislation regarding equality, diversity and inclusion.



Priority 1.2 - All children of school age will have Improved wellbeing and a greater sense of belonging

Action 4.5.4.11

We will work with schools to explore the benefits of employing Family Liaison Officers or similar roles, including a cluster approach, out of delegated budgets in order to support pupils and parents to overcome challenges that impact negatively on learning and wellbeing

Progress 2022 - 2023

Schools have been given all of the information needed to appoint a family liaison officer if they choose to or can afford to. At the time of writing we are aware of five primary schools that have a specific family engagement or family support officer. Other schools may have a similar job being completed by a member of staff under a different job title.

Action 4.5.4.12

We will work in partnership with schools and local organisations to ensure our children and young people 'are knowledgeable about their culture, community, society and the world now and in the past and respect the needs and rights of others, as a member of a diverse society'

Progress 2022 - 2023

Each school received training, information and advice on how to realise the mandatory elements of the curriculum.

Most clusters are engaged in whole staff training on 'Cynefin' and many have developed their own resources including websites.

A teacher has been seconded within the council to support schools with developing 'Cynefin' and has worked with every cluster since taking up the role and has offered individual support for every primary school in NPT. The resources and progress are a particular strength in NPT.

The 'Cynefin' work continues to be developed and nearly all primary schools along with a few secondary schools have received this support.

Priority 1.2 - All children of school age will have Improved wellbeing and a greater sense of belonging

Action 4.5.4.13

We will work with schools and local organisations to ensure teaching of the new curriculum reflects the multi-ethnic nature of Wales

Progress 2022 - 2023

Presentations on the principles of the new curriculum have been given to the NPT BME Community Association and Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual (VAWDASV) group.

Appropriate resources continue to be developed by the Vulnerable Learners Service in collaboration with the School Improvement Team. These resources are available to all schools.

Secondary schools have designed, and continue to be supported in the delivery of, a mandatory progressive curriculum for years 7 and 8.



Health and Wellbeing

To Promote Wellbeing and Good Mental Health and Tackle Stigma and Discrimination

Priority 2.1 - Our staff will be supported and appropriate services promoted

Action 4.5.4.14

As an employer we will raise awareness of mental health and support services

Progress 2022 - 2023

We have recruited 33 Employee Champions who after undertaking the Mental Health First Aid (Level 2) Training Course in May 2023 will be the point of contact within their services for signposting colleagues to corporate initiatives and support services in relation to mental health.

Our Occupational Health Unit continues to provide mental health support for those employees who require it and who are referred to the unit by their manager.

Action 4.5.4.15

As an employer we will update and implement policies to address mental health in the workplace

Progress 2022 - 2023

Work continued throughout the year with all relevant policies updated as required.

Our Future of Work Team continues to be responsible for bringing forward ideas for implementing policies to address mental health support for our employees.

We introduced the Reasonable Adjustments Disability Passport to support employees who join the council, or who move jobs within the council, with reasonable adjustments and discussions with managers.

Priority 2.1 - Our staff will be supported and appropriate services promoted

Action 4.5.4.16

We will provide information to employees about mental health and signpost to support services

Progress 2022 - 2023

Our Staff Wellbeing online group continues to provide and promote courses, tips, information and awareness of mental health and wellbeing.

A range of literature promoting mental health and wellbeing as well as links to support services are available to staff via our internal webpages which staff can access both at work and at home.

In addition signposting and information on mental health and wellbeing is provided by HR Officers who support managers in managing sickness absence.

Action 4.5.4.17

We will continue to implement our Time to Change Wales Employer Pledge Action Plan

Progress 2022 - 2023

This remains a priority and the work in the original action plan has been completed. However, we continue to develop the action plan to ensure it remains relevant and supports our employees.

Priority 2.1 - Our staff will be supported and appropriate services promoted

Action 4.5.4.18

We will provide training and resources for staff to help raise awareness of mental health issues and help reduce the stigma associated with mental health.

Progress 2022 - 2023

There are a wide range of resources on the Internet that employees can access either whilst at work, or when at home.

Our training team run training courses to support our employees and their managers in relation to mental health with the following courses being run:

- Mental Health First Aid (Level 1) course - 32 attendees
- Menopause Awareness Raising Session (all staff) - 11 attendees
- Menopause Awareness Raising Session (for make staff only) - 5 attendees
- Raising Awareness – Transgender Issues -14 attendees

 **Priority 2.2 - Our children and young people can access appropriate support****Action 4.5.4.19**

We will redesign our systems relating to Emotional, Mental Health Wellbeing support to provide a simpler integrated access to services

Progress 2022 - 2023

A multi-agency wellbeing steering group is being established to ensure alignment of resources and plans across the Directorate in relation to supporting emotional health and wellbeing.

Our School Based Counselling Service has been restructured to ensure staffing consistency and to avoid potential recruitment issues. Additional staff have been recruited to address the extended non statutory age range, meaning that children and young people from the age of 5 can access therapy.

In addition the counselling service has been redesigned to incorporate a service specifically for supporting school staff.

A conference was held with all schools in collaboration with Michelle Jaynes, Whole School Approach to emotional health and wellbeing to focus specifically on staff wellbeing.

Priority 2.3 - Our Communities that need support will be able to access appropriate services

Action 4.5.4.20

We will honour our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, ensuring that no veteran, or family member of serving personnel or a veteran, is disadvantaged by their service, when accessing health and wellbeing support and services.

Progress 2022 - 2023

Our Armed Forces Liaison Officer (AFLO) continues to work closely with other regional AFLOs to share good practice and ideas as well as to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant.

The AFLO continued to attend local meetings with Veterans NHS Wales and other veterans' organisations as well as signposting and providing information to the armed forces community.

The Armed Forces Covenant is now enshrined in law and the council has a 'due regard' to ensure that the members of the armed forces community are not disadvantaged in relation to health, education and housing. The Ministry of Defence held online sessions in May 2023 to provide further information on this new requirement.

To celebrate Armed Forces Week a flag raising ceremony took place at both Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres. Also an Armed Forces Day event took place in Aberafan Shopping Centre that received excellent feedback from attendees, partners and the shopping centre itself, while the Mayor's Armed Forces Festival held between 29 October and 13 November 2022 helped raise awareness of the armed forces community.

Action 4.5.4.21

We will contribute to the Public Services Board's work to reduce suicide rates in the county borough .

The Safeguarding Board oversees a Suicide Rapid Response Group (SRRG) which looks at all instances of suspected suicide (adult) and unexpected death (children). Data collated during the period has indicated a spike in suspected suicides in 2022 which has been flagged to relevant authorities.

 **Priority 2.3 - Our Communities that need support will be able to access appropriate services****Progress 2022 - 2023**

A pathway for responding to significant suicide attempts has been developed with the support of survivors for use across the region. A suite of data has also been developed to monitor and elicit learning from this area of practice. The pathway was launched in August 2022.

Action 4.5.4.22

We will provide information to the public about mental health and signpost to support services from our website

Progress 2022 - 2023

The action is considered complete and no longer relevant given changes in circumstances since the development of the SEP in 2020.

Action 4.5.4.23

We will work with Public Health Wales and Swansea Bay University Local Health Board to help address the impact of COVID-19 on health and social care staff

Progress 2022 - 2023

The action is considered complete and no longer relevant given changes in circumstances since the development of the SEP in 2020.

Priority 2.3 - Our Communities that need support will be able to access appropriate services

Action 4.5.4.24

We will work within the regional NHS Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) Service to engage all people, including those with protected characteristics in the health protection programme and we will also ensure that all people who need to access the TTP service can do so, ensuring access caters for all .

Progress 2022 - 2023

The Regional TTP service was disbanded on the 30 June 2022 and the majority of Welsh Government funding ceased. However a Health Protection team of 17 people has been maintained in case required. This team undertakes health protection projects and maintains competency and the reserve list of TTP who may be called on if Covid rates escalate considerably and there is a need for contact tracing again.

Personal Safety

To ensure people and communities are safe, respected and free from violence and abuse

Priority 3.1 People feel safe in their homes

Action 4.5.4.25

We will increase the reports of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Neath Port Talbot, through awareness raising and challenging attitudes

Progress 2022 - 2023

This is an ongoing action for the Community Safety Partnership and the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Leadership Group (VAWDASV).

Communication & Engagement continues to be the first objective of the NPT Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy (2023-2026) with an aim to 'Increase the reports of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) in Neath Port Talbot, through awareness raising and challenging attitudes.'

The Communication & Engagement group continues to deliver campaigns, to raise awareness and increase people's understanding about VAWDASV, including the help and support that is available locally, regionally and nationally.

Each year the Community Safety team supports the International White Ribbon campaign which aims to end male violence against women and girls. This can include engagement with grass roots sports clubs, as well as social media campaigns and a regional event to raise awareness. We hold an information stall at Neath Port Talbot Hospital every year to mark the campaign. This provides an excellent opportunity to meet with staff, visitors and patients of the hospital so is always well attended and very worthwhile.

Priority 3.2 People feel safe in their communities

Action 4.5.4.26

We will increase awareness in children and young people of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong

Progress 2022 - 2023

This is an ongoing piece of work for the Community Safety team, and the Relationship & Sexuality Education sub group which is accountable to the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Leadership Group.

Children and Young People are the focus of objective 2 of the revised NPT Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy for 2023-2026, implementing the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.

Action 4.5.4.27

Provide all victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs led, strength based, gender responsive services across Neath Port Talbot

Progress 2022 - 2023

This is an ongoing piece of work for the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Leadership Group

Equal access to appropriately resourced services continues to be one of the main objectives of the NPT Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy, implementing the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.



Priority 3.2 People feel safe in their communities

Action 4.5.4.28

We will work with members of local equality groups, partners and our communities to encourage the reporting of hate incidents/crime and ensure people get support which is fit for purpose

Progress 2022 - 2023

We continue to receive Welsh Government funding which allows us to employ a Community Cohesion Officer within the Community Safety Team, as well as to support the delivery of any campaign and initiatives to support the work across Neath Port Talbot. Our Community Cohesion Officer works with the local BME Community Association, the local Hate Crime Officer, local faith groups and other minority groups to ensure we are actively raising awareness of hate crime, as well as encouraging reporting of any incidents through to the appropriate agencies and signposting for appropriate support.

Action 4.5.4.29

We will support the use of the BME Community Association Access Card (to help breakdown language barriers when accessing service)

Progress 2022 - 2023

The Association is reviewing its ongoing work programme. All actions relating to the Association in the SEP are being reviewed by the Association for relevance and feedback from this will inform the review of the SEP going forward.

Action 4.5.4.30

We will support the BME Community Association to build on the work already undertaken in the Community Profiling exercise as well as to extend its scope

We continue to support the Association to achieve their aims and objectives. HR representatives attended the wider Association meeting in June to discuss employment including diversity, culture and equality in the Council.



Priority 3.2 People feel safe in their communities

Progress 2022 - 2023

The Association, in partnership with the Council, held a BME Recruitment event in January 2023. A number of organisations were present on the day to provide information and advice on careers and volunteering opportunities. The event was well received and considered a success by the 50 members of our BME communities who attended.

SWP attended the wider Association in September 2022 and shared information and data on hate crime as part of the wider community cohesion discussions.

This action will be considered in light of the Association's work programme and as part of the revision of the SEP during 2023-2024.

Action 4.5.4.31

We will develop an action plan in response to the feedback from the Community Cohesion Survey

Progress 2022 - 2023

This action is being reviewed in light of the appointment of a new community cohesion officer, the changes that have taken place since the original community cohesion survey and the ongoing response required as part of the review of the SEP.

Priority 3.2 People feel safe in their communities

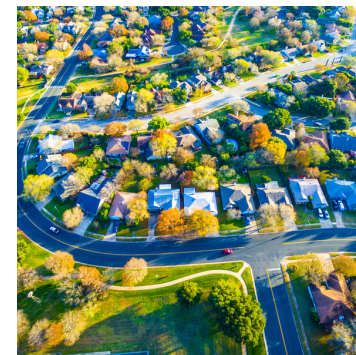
Action 4.5.4.32

We will continue to work with the BME Community Association to further understand the lived experiences of members of our BAME communities, particularly in relation of their experiences of hate incidents/crimes

Progress 2022 - 2023

Building on discussions and engagement with the Community Association and the council's own NPT Ethnic Employee Network we supported a BME Recruitment Day, in January 2023 to help break down barriers, increase awareness and encourage applications from our BME communities.

We will continue to work with the BME Community Association to further understand the lived experiences of members of our BAME communities, particularly in relation of their experiences of hate incidents/crimes



Employment

To ensure our workforce is more reflective of our community, our policies are fair and equitable and gender pay gaps are reduced

 **Priority 4.1 Our workforce reflects our diverse communities and is supported by our policies**

Action 4.5.4.33

We will ensure a fair and transparent recruitment and selection process that encourages a wider talent pool and facilitates a more equal gender balance

Progress 2022 - 2023

Two Recruitment & Selection training courses have been held; with a total of 11 recruiting managers attending. A further two sessions are planned for June and September 2023

Our iTrent recruitment module now includes anonymised applications which will ensure recruitment is fair and transparent. The anonymised application process was piloted with a range of new posts.

Action 4.5.4.34

We will promote, facilitate, analyse and monitor flexibility in the workplace at all levels, to enable women to progress and to ensure compatibility with a multi-generational workforce

Progress 2022 - 2023

Our Gender Equality Action Plan has been reviewed with new actions identified which will help progress this action. For example a data capture exercise, undertaken by the Future of Work team, will help determine the impact of the Hybrid Working Framework on gender.



Priority 4.1 Our workforce reflects our diverse communities and is supported by our policies

Progress 2022 - 2023

In partnership with Chwarae Teg, we launched a new mentoring programme, NPT Ment2Be. The scheme is designed to help mentors gain new skills to help their own professional and personal development whilst giving mentees the chance to develop their skills from their mentors' knowledge and experience. Whilst the principle aim is to support the progression of low paid women in our workforce the mentoring scheme is inclusive and open to all employees

Action 4.5.4.35

We will collect and monitor data in more depth related to flexible working

Progress 2022 - 2023

Actions identified as part of the review of the Gender Equality Action Plan during the period will help progress this specific action. For example a data capture exercise, undertaken by the Future of Work team, will help determine the impact of the Hybrid Working Framework on gender, while a review of the Framework itself will be invaluable in understanding its impacts on relevant sections of the workforce.

Action 4.5.4.36

We will scrutinise the Shared Parental Leave uptake to monitor gender balance and encourage uptake across genders

Progress 2022 - 2023

With the capabilities of our new HR system along with the implementation of associated processes we are in a better position to more effectively monitor our policies including the shared parental leave policy.

 **Priority 4.1 Our workforce reflects our diverse communities and is supported by our policies****Progress 2022 - 2023**

During the year just two applications for shared parental leave were received; the low take up is potentially due to the introduction of more flexible working arrangements with the new Hybrid Working Framework.

Action 4.5.4.37

We will, in the spirit of the Armed Forces Covenant, include a guaranteed interview scheme for recently discharged members of the Armed Forces

Progress 2022 - 2023

We continue to offer a guaranteed interview scheme for Armed Forces veterans (who meet the required criteria) which is included within our application process, providing recruiting managers with clear instruction of any applicants who are eligible. We provide guidance on this process as part of our recruitment & selection training for managers.

We continue to provide the Career Transition Partnership with a list of current vacancies on a weekly basis. The Career Transition Partnership is the Ministry of Defence's official provider for supporting leavers of the Armed Forces transitioning from the military into civilian life.

We have attained a silver award, employer recognition scheme as part of the Armed Forces Covenant.



Priority 4.1 Our workforce reflects our diverse communities and is supported by our policies

Action 4.5.4.38

We will consider how our policies and practices impact on our staff who are employed on casual and temporary contracts and part time contracts

Progress 2022 - 2023

We have identified areas for review within our Recruitment and Selection policy which may impact on female dominated areas, including the review of language used in our job adverts. All relevant policies have been amended in light of these findings

Work is ongoing work in relation to annual leave calculations for casual and term time employees to ensure fairness in line with legislation.

Action 4.5.4.39

We will develop a BAME Equality and Diversity Action Plan, developing a set of evidenced based actions with the aim of improving equality and diversity amongst the Council's workforce

Progress 2022 - 2023

The Ethnic Minority Employee Network has been successfully established with its terms of reference created and has fed into the Council's Anti Racism Strategy/Action Plan with tangible actions that support the terms of reference.

Priority 4.1 Our workforce reflects our diverse communities and is supported by our policies

Action 4.5.4.40

We will work to improve our Corporate Culture, to ensure each member of staff is valued and respected.

Progress 2022 - 2023

We have reviewed our equalities training programme to ensure its effectiveness for and appeal to staff. A new training programme has been developed to reflect legislative and corporate requirements as well as including more topic based training as identified by staff, for example courses on mental health and wellbeing.

Action 4.5.4.41

We will work with staff to determine the appetite to form a BAME Employee Forum to help ensure voices are heard

Progress 2022 - 2023

The Ethnic Minority Employee Network was established with agreed terms of reference and a chair and vice chair appointed by its membership. A strategy/action plan to support the aims of the terms of reference has also been developed by the Network.

Regular meetings are held between the Network and invited officer when appropriate.

Action 4.5.4.42

We will offer opportunities to young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) to help them gain experience and skills in order to enter the world of employment

Our Keeping in Touch (KIT) and Next Steps teams have continued to support young people aged 16-24 with the aim of offering them opportunities to enter education, employment or training.

Priority 4.1 Our workforce reflects our diverse communities and is supported by our policies

Progress 2022 - 2023

125 young people received support during the year by our KIT team, with 86 (69%) young people achieving a successful outcome; either employment, education, training or engaged with a specialist service.

We have taken on extra youth mentors in the Communities for Work Plus Team to work with the growing numbers of young people being out of work and struggling to find employment. We have supported young people from all over NPT, those furthest away from the labour market and also those that are close to gaining employment that just need a little support to make that leap into work.

Action 4.5.4.42

We will offer opportunities to young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) to help them gain experience and skills in order to enter the world of employment

Progress 2022 - 2023

We continue provide Chrome Books and wifi units for those who were struggling with IT equipment ensuring they are able to search and apply for jobs while being supported by the Team.

49 young people are on our Jobs Growth Wales+ programme while 23 young people are undertaking apprenticeships with Pathways at Neath College.

Action 4.5.4.43

We will revisit staff training on equalities, particular re-visiting people's understanding of disability, including non-visible disabilities

Progress 2022 - 2023

We have reviewed our Equalities Training programme to ensure its effectiveness for and appeal to staff.

Priority 4.1 Our workforce reflects our diverse communities and is supported by our policies

Progress 2022 - 2023

Training sessions have been held a range of both general and specific equalities courses including to transgender awareness, menopause awareness (including for males supporting colleagues in the workplace, managers/team leaders) as well as unconscious bias and an 'Introduction to Equalities'.

We secured funded Anti-Racism training through the WLGA 'Improvement Offer' but the session have been delayed due to a change of training provider. It is anticipated that these sessions will now take place during the latter half of 2023-2024.

 **Priority 4.2 Our Gender Pay Gaps are reduced****Action 4.5.4.44**

We will implement the Fair Play Employer Scheme Gender Diversity Action Plan.

Progress 2022 - 2023

We undertook a review of the Gender Equality Action Plan during 2022-2023 as the majority of actions had been completed. New actions has been identified which will enable us to make further progress in this area. These actions build on the work already undertaken particularly on the implementation of the hybrid working arrangements and the Ment2Be scheme - aimed primarily at women.

Action 4.5.4.45

We will address the gender pay gap within the Council by implementing the Fair Play Employers Action Plan

Progress 2022 - 2023

In Partnership with Chwarae Teg, we launched a new mentoring programme, NPT Ment2Be. The scheme is designed to help mentors gain new skills to help their own professional and personal development whilst giving mentees the chance to develop their skills from their mentors' knowledge and experience. Whilst the principle aim is to support the progression of low paid women in our workforce the mentoring scheme is inclusive and open to all employees.

Participation

To ensure services are accessible for all and people and communities are able to better influence decisions that affect them

Priority 5.1 Our services, digital and traditional, are accessible to all

Action 4.5.4.46

We will continuously review and update our website to improve its accessibility

Progress 2022 - 2023

We have continued to improve our website to ensure it meets the AA standard as required by the new public sector accessibility regulations and currently score 96% which ranks us 27th place for accessibility amongst UK councils.

We continue to use best practice accessibility tools such as Silktide to monitor our website for accessibility issues and continue to review and refresh our website to ensure it meets this standard. Further work is being undertaken to remove non structured documents such as PDFs off our website to ensure compliance with the AA standard.

Action 4.5.4.47

We will work to address the barriers people and organisations face to participate on-line

Progress 2022 - 2023

Extensive work continues to address barriers people and organisations face to participate online. We have further implemented new national gov.uk design styles, components and patterns to improve the customer experience on NPT.gov.uk.

Our digital services team continues to work closely with service areas to help them modernise service delivery, monitor user feedback and conduct user research as part of our user centred design approach. This is undertaken alongside partners such as the Centre for Digital Public Services Wales to ensure continuous improvement and that our on-line services are easy to use. Feedback from residents helps us understand what they need from us and creates a prioritised backlog of work to deliver.

Priority 5.1 Our services, digital and traditional, are accessible to all

Action 4.5.4.48

We will work to identify the opportunities across the County Borough for citizens to improve their digital skills and understanding

Progress 2022 - 2023

Our Digital Ambassador has worked closely with the LAC co-ordinators to support a number of clients who experienced digital inclusion issues.

Digital inclusion sessions continue to be held in Pontardawe Library, Sandfields Library, Neath YMCA, Port Talbot Library and Baglan Library.

Over 90 individuals have been helped to use digital devices based on their own personal needs. Since January 2022, 62 of these people have completed relevant short courses on Learn My Way which has enabled them to access online services such as shopping service, utility providers, and updating driving licences, etc. As people have progressed with their digital skills, they have also pursued hobbies online, such as collecting photographs or researching local history.

Online safety, recognising online scams and fraud session continue to be delivered and are re-enforced through the digital inclusion Facebook page by posting up to date information.

Action 4.5.4.49

We will work through the Community Safety Partnership and the Safeguarding Board to prevent Cybercrime and protect people against exploitation

Progress 2022 - 2023

Cyber Crime and Scams continues to be a standing agenda item at our Community Safety Tasking Group, which is accountable to the Safer NPT Community Safety Partnership Board.

 **Priority 5.1 Our services, digital and traditional, are accessible to all****Progress 2022 - 2023**

In partnership, the teams actively engage with residents to raise awareness of cyber crime and scams, advising residents to be alert and how to reduce the risk of becoming a victim.

The Community Safety team have a wealth of literature and useful items that are handed out at engagement events to help further support the work. Social media is used regularly to raise awareness of the latest cyber scams and our partners help to share these messages and ensure the maximum reach amongst our residents.

During 2022 the Community Safety Team focused Loan Sharks, which will undoubtedly become more of a concern with the cost of living crisis and current climate. While during the latter part of 2022-2023 we have the focus has been on raising awareness of energy related scams, with scammers promoting fake rebates to draw people in and share bank details etc.

Action 4.5.4.50

We will improve physical access to the committee facilities in both Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres.

Progress 2022 - 2023

August 2022 saw the completion of work to improve physical access to the Council Chamber in Port Talbot Civic Centre together with the installation of broadcasting and translation equipment.

In addition a ground floor conference room has also been created in Port Talbot Civic Centre which has greatly improved the accessibility and flexibility of our committee facilities.

Priority 5.1 Our services, digital and traditional, are accessible to all

Action 4.5.4.51

We will ensure that the many services available to the Armed Forces Community are accessible online, but also by telephone through the Veteran Gateway.

Progress 2022 - 2023

Our Armed Forces Liaison Officer (AFLO) continues to support the armed forces community helping ensure that services available specifically for members of that community are accessible to all be that online or through the Veteran Gateway.

Online support and the Veteran Gateway continue to be updated as and when new information becomes available.

Action 4.5.4.52

We will work with local businesses and organisations to explore alternative arrangements in accessing retail services for those experiencing difficulties due to limited digital access etc

Progress 2022 - 2023

This invaluable initiative was established as a quick and essential response to the difficulties faced by many of our residents and businesses during the initial 'lock down' period in the pandemic; a situation which necessitated a different approach for businesses and residents alike. However, with the lifting of restrictions and life returning to some sort of normality the reliance on this service has diminished to the extent that the action is no longer viable.

Our work to help improve digital skills in our communities has also helped overcome potential hesitancy and reluctance to access alternative methods of shopping thereby rendering the action obsolete.

 **Priority 5.1 Our services, digital and traditional, are accessible to all****Action 4.5.4.53**

We will continue to support the key principles as contained in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021: including programmes to support disabled candidates standing at elections, and the production of a public participation strategy

Progress 2022 - 2023

Our Public Participation Strategy was adopted by Council on 26 April 2023. The Strategy was co-produced by the NPT Community of Practice on Involvement & Engagement who helped identify what was already in place to meet the six areas essential for inclusion as identified in the Statutory Guidance on Public Participation Strategies; promote the awareness of the council's functions, how to become and councillor and what that entails as well as awareness amongst current councillors of the benefits of using social media; facilitate access to information about council decisions; promote and facilitate processes so that local people can make representations to the council about a decision before, and after, it is made and provide arrangements to bring views of the public to the attention of overview and scrutiny committees.

Priority 5.2 Our communities will enjoy increased social and community cohesion

Action 4.5.4.54

We will support local groups, including the BME Community Association, to develop community activities and events.

Progress 2022 - 2023

Our third sector grant application process for the financial year 2023-2024 closed on 14 October 2022. 37, out of a total of 64, applications were successful sharing £586,000 of funding.

Action 4.5.4.55

We will further develop our links with our faith communities

Progress 2022 - 2023

While representatives from the faith community continue to be members of our Equality and Community Cohesion Group, we are conscious the representation is limited. To this end consideration has been given on how best to engage more widely with the faith community going forward.

An interfaith event, hosted by the Mayor, was held in February 2023, provided an opportunity to engage more effectively with the community and has provided a foundation for ongoing engagement.

Action 4.5.4.56

We will provide information and a signposting service for those who wish to learn English and/or Welsh

Progress 2022 - 2023

We continue to offer Welsh language courses to all staff. These courses include Work Welsh short and full courses; Canolradd/Intermediate; Uwch/Advanced; Golywi-Siarad/Proficiency-Speaking; Welcome Parts 1 and 2 and Teacher Parts 1 and 2.

Priority 5.2 Our communities will enjoy increased social and community cohesion

Progress 2022 - 2023

61 staff enrolled on Welsh language courses during the period joining the 267 staff already undertaking training.

Our 'Learning and using Welsh' webpage includes links to resources for learning, improving language skills as well as opportunities for using Welsh

Specific actions to promote, encourage and facilitate learning Welsh in Neath Port Talbot have been included in the revised Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2023-2028.

Action 4.5.4.57

We will develop/strengthen policies to respond to an aging population and support the formation of a new group to address this

Progress 2022 - 2023

Local Authority Age Friendly Funding was made available by Welsh Government during the period, with a work plan developed and implemented in the latter half of the year.

With the advertisement of an Aging Well post towards the end of 2022-2023 it is anticipated that progress can be made on this action in the coming year.

Action 4.5.4.58

We will work with members of the Trans community to help raise awareness.

Progress 2022 - 2023

Representatives from the recently established NPT LGBTQIA+ group have provided insight and comment on current and potential future actions at an initial SEP review workshop held in December 2022.

Priority 5.2 Our communities will enjoy increased social and community cohesion

Action 4.5.4.59

We will develop a rights-based approach to our work, with a focus on children's rights working with Youth Mayor, Youth Council amongst others.

Progress 2022 - 2023

The Youth Council continued to meet during the year to discuss issues that affect the lives of young people as well as ways to help raise the profile of young people in NPT. The council continued to meet with the Cabinet during the year to raise issues and provide feedback on work undertaken.

The Youth Council's focus for 2022-2023 were health & wellbeing, environment and poverty as identified in the Make your Mark annual consultation.

The new Youth mayor and deputy youth mayor were inaugurated in March 2023.

Action 4.5.4.60

We will establish engagement mechanisms, for example a new Citizens' Panel, and use responses to ensure that the council's policy making and service development is informed by what matters to people.

Progress 2022 - 2023

We developed our Public Participation Strategy to meet requirements contained in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 which was published in April 2023.

Priority 5.2 Our communities will enjoy increased social and community cohesion

Action 4.5.4.61

We will work with organisations that support the Armed Forces Community to help reduce isolation and loneliness, which is felt by many when they leave the services or by a member of the family when the serving family member is deployed on active service or training

Progress 2022 - 2023

Our Armed Forces Liaison Officer continues to research available grant funding for various support organisations as well as utilising social media to promote veterans organisations that help veterans and their families

An Armed Forces Day event held in Aberafan Shopping Centre enabled organisations to meet the public and share information on what they do. 14 different organisations attended the event, including a wide range of military charities, cadet forces and other third sector organisations.

The Mayor's Armed Forces Festival 29 October – 13 November 2022 was extremely successful with events held at Aberafan Shopping Centre, Ysgol Cwm Brombil for service children and the festival concert held on 11 November.

Ysgol Cwm Brombil was awarded bronze status in the Armed Forces Friendly Schools Cymru scheme in recognition of the support given to their service children by embedding good practice into the daily running of the school and creating a positive environment.

Action 4.5.4.62

We will implement the action plan in support of the Digital Charter Award for which we have recently been recognised

Progress 2022 - 2023

Building on the foundations already laid down through our previous digital strategy we developed our Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) which outlines how we will embrace new approaches and emerging technologies to provide the best value, user centred products and services.

Priority 5.2 Our communities will enjoy increased social and community cohesion

Our Digital Partners network continues to help staff to gain digital confidence and overcome any barriers to becoming digitally active in both the workplace and their personal lives. Digital Partners are trained to support colleagues learn new digital skills and promote digital skills development across the council.

Action 4.5.4.63

We will work in partnership with relevant groups to address our shared history and explore ways to better express this within our communities

Progress 2022 - 2023

Our education service is working with the BME Community Association to explore and ensure the new curriculum addresses and celebrates both our individual and shared cultures and heritage in NPT.

The newly developed Culture and Heritage Strategy will reflect on past contributions as well as welcoming present and future contributions of all our communities' heritage and culture to our areas

Action 4.5.4.64

We will support local small businesses in implementing the ever-changing requirements of the Welsh Government's guidelines in response to the COVID-19 outbreak

Progress 2022 - 2023

This action was in response to the situation brought about by the pandemic in 2020. As restrictions have been lifted and the necessity of the introduction of new restrictions and guidelines has passed, the action is considered complete.



Living standards

To work to reduce poverty and support independent living

Priority 6.1 People and communities will benefit from interventions to alleviate poverty

Action 4.5.4.65

We will develop an action plan to address the issues for those with low net disposable income.

Progress 2022 - 2023

The Cost of Living Steering Group drafted an action plan detailing some of the issues to be addressed to support households on low incomes. This included the Hardship Relief Scheme which was launched on 29 November 2022: by 12 December 636 referrals for support had been received and resulted in a pause to the referral process to enable staff to meet the demand.

The Warm Spaces directory was set-up in December 2022 followed by the launch of the Warm Spaces grant scheme.

An e-bulletin, web-page and Cost of Living leaflets were developed to maximise the dissemination of cost of living information to partner organisations, residents and staff.

In March 2023 the Cost of living Steering Group facilitated a workshop to take stock of the work completed to date and to agree next steps. A post workshop report has been shared across the wider partnership for further feedback and was considered by the Group at its meeting in May.

We have been successful in recruiting to two posts (funded by SPF) to further progress this work which will include the development of a Poverty Strategy and the further utilisation of the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT).



Priority 6.1 People and communities will benefit from interventions to alleviate poverty

Action 4.5.4.66

We will embrace the new Socio-economic Duty.

Progress 2022 - 2023

We developed an action plan to address the recommendations from all audits of our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process: actions include the revision of the IIA process, the tool and guidance, as well as a training programme.

Since its introduction in March 2021 the socio economic duty has been incorporated into the IIA tool for use when taking 'strategic decisions' such as the budget, corporate plan, setting objectives etc.

Action 4.5.4.67

We will ensure those families entitled to free school meals continue to receive support throughout the school holidays in line with Welsh Government guidelines.

Progress 2022 - 2023

All families entitled to free school meals (FSM) received payments throughout all school holidays.

Action 4.5.4.68

We will work with local organisations and local businesses to explore how to maintain access to appropriate cultural foods during periods of restricted movement/lockdown going forward.

Progress 2022 - 2023

This was an initiative that was established for the periods of lock down during the pandemic. As the situation has improved and restrictions are no longer in force it is no longer required.

Priority 6.2 People will benefit from programmes and support to live as independently as possible

Action 4.5.4.69

We will support the Regional Partnership Board to develop and continue to provide a sustainable range of services that meet demand, enabling individuals to remain at home maintaining their independence for as long as possible receiving appropriate support at times of need.

Progress 2022 - 2023

The action is considered complete and no longer relevant given changes in circumstances since the development of the SEP in 2020.


Action 4.5.4.70

We will continue to help people to learn and interact with others so they can be part of their communities

Progress 2022 - 2023

The Community Cohesion Officer has been involved in a range of activities to help support communities share and better understand their own and others' experiences as well as to helping facilitate, support and coordinate activities in conjunction with council services and local organisations. Examples include working with VLS on Black History Month activities; supporting local Chai & Chat sessions.

While addressing and promoting community cohesion is key to the role of the Community Cohesion Officer it is not solely the responsibility of one person or service area. Consequently, current and future plans and strategies will contribute to ensuring our communities are more cohesive.



Priority 6.2 People will benefit from programmes and support to live as independently as possible

Action 4.5.4.71

We will help support people to live as independent a life as possible

Progress 2022 - 2023

The action is considered complete and no longer relevant given changes in circumstances since the development of the Strategic Equalities Plan in 2020.

Action 4.5.4.72

We will consider the continuation of the Safe and Well scheme to help support vulnerable members of our communities

Progress 2022 - 2023

The action is considered complete and no longer relevant given changes in circumstances since the development of the Strategic Equalities Plan in 2020.

Action 4.5.4.73

We will improve communications with our vulnerable groups through a wide range of formats to better inform and support them to live as full a life as possible during the current coronavirus outbreak.

Progress 2022 - 2023

The action is considered complete and no longer relevant given changes in circumstances since the development of the Strategic Equalities Plan in 2020.

Priority 6.3 Transport links are maintained or enhanced

Action 4.5.4.74

We will support community transport initiatives .

Progress 2022 - 2023

D.A.N.S.A have recruited a coordinator who has worked with the local community and Councillors to introduce a community transport scheme in the Afan valley. Operated by volunteers with an electric zero emission vehicle with the charging point at Cymer swimming pool.

The Amman Valley schemes secured £115,886 share of the funding available to progress their schemes. The schemes are operational with 2 zero emission electric vehicles.

D.A.N.S.A have secured circa £450k with which they have purchased three new charging points, three 14 seat EV buses and two EV cars. They are also awaiting the fitting of Solar panels to their unit in Crynant Business Park.

Our Passenger Transport section continue to support community transport operators and look for new opportunities to expand their services.

Action 4.5.4.75

We will work together with partners on the regional Swansea Bay City Deal transport plan.

Progress 2022 - 2023

This will be a long term project over a number of years. Work is ongoing with regional partners to explore schemes with Transport for Wales that will improve transport links throughout the region.



LET'S KEEP TALKING

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