

Annual Equality Report Gwynedd Council 2021-22



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Foreword

This Annual Report is submitted after the end of my term as the Elected Member with responsibility for equality. Having said that, equality is very important to me and as the Council's Deputy Leader I will certainly continue to promote the field especially as the Ensuring Fairness for All project is one of the Council's improvement priorities.

It must be said that the two years since the 2020-24 Equality Plan was adopted by the Cabinet at the beginning of March 2020 have been difficult. The pandemic has had a significant impact on our methods of working and on our schedules. I am therefore pleased to be able to report that we have been able to progress during the year. Although we have not been able to achieve everything we had hoped, a great deal of preparatory work had been undertaken and we are on the right track to complete everything within the Plan's lifespan.



During the year, it was a pleasure to submit the new Equality and Inclusion Policy to the Cabinet, which they subsequently approved. The decision to work with Inclusive Employers to improve our employment policies is also exciting. Another important thing to note in the field of equality are the refugees who had started to arrive from Ukraine by March 2021. We very much welcome them here to Gwynedd, as we do the other refugees we support. We are trying to give them as much help as possible, while of course deploring the reason they have had to leave their country.

I am now pleased to be able to hand over the reins to my fellow councillor, Menna Jones, knowing that the field is in safe hands.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "N. Jeffreys".

Councillor Nia Jeffreys,
Gwynedd Council Cabinet Member
for Corporate Support

Foreword

Thank you very much Nia, I am very pleased to take the responsibility for equality on behalf of the Cabinet. I appreciate how important it is to ensure that the Council's services are suitable for everyone.

I am also looking forward to seeing the projects in the Equality Scheme come to fruition over the next two years. Having a range of courses in the field of equality will be useful for our staff, and I'm really looking forward to seeing what improvements we can make in our employment arrangements. The developments in the areas of impact assessment and engagement with the people of Gwynedd are also very exciting.

Councillor Menna Jones,
Gwynedd Council Cabinet Member



1. Introduction

In March 2020, the Council published the 'Gwynedd Council Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24' (the Plan) in order to continue with the work of Ensuring Fairness for All. This fulfils public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010. The Act has been designed to reduce inequalities between specific groups by asking public bodies to give due attention to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Plan looks at fairness in terms of nine protected characteristics, i.e.:

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Sex
- Race (including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality)
- Disability
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sexual orientation
- Religion or belief - including a lack of belief
- Marriage and civil partnership

(Equality Act 2010)

The Plan sets out and describes the work that would form the Council's priority in this field for the four years in question, and we have divided the work into five objectives, namely:

- **Objective 1:** Strengthen and deepen the capacity and commitment of Gwynedd Council Staff and Elected Members in the field of Equality, by ensuring that they receive the right training.
- **Objective 2:** Improve the information we have from and about people with protected characteristics.
- **Objective 3:** Build on the work already carried out to embed Equality Impact Assessments as a tool to ensure better decision-making
- **Objective 4:** Act to reduce the gender pay gap and identify any pay gap based on any other characteristic.
- **Objective 5:** Act to attract a range of applicants in order to increase the diversity of our workforce.

The two years since the Plan became operational have been very difficult for everyone. The crisis caused by Covid-19 has highlighted a number of inequalities and it is important that we

look at our services in the light of this to ensure that we are fair. Lockdown led us to operate differently, e.g. more use of information technology, which has caused problems in some ways but has also been an opportunity to progress methods of working. It has affected our schedules as we have had to find and get accustomed to the new ways of working and people have had different priorities.

We have also looked at the 5 objectives of the Plan, in the same way as last year, to ensure that they remain suitable as things start to improve and stabilise. Our conclusion is that they are suitable. We have not identified any need to add to the objectives at this time and our priority will be to complete the work that has been identified within the lifetime of the Plan.

This report outlines, according to objectives, what action points we have committed to in our Strategic Equality Plan, what we hoped to achieve during 2021/22 and what we were able to achieve in reality. The report also looks at the type of information the Council gathers in the field of equality and the way it is used.



Objective 1:

Strengthen and deepen the capacity and commitment of Gwynedd Council Staff and Elected Members in the field of Equality, by ensuring that they receive the right training.

Action Point 1:

We will create an equality training programme as a core field that will be varied, innovative, specific, and of the highest quality. It will be appropriately tailored for all staff members on all levels, along with Elected Members, in order to improve their understanding of their duty towards equality.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

- consider the effectiveness of our current training and discover what would help staff to understand more about the field
- work with Council Managers in order to discover which presentation methods would be most suitable for the needs of various staff, e.g. front-line staff, managers
- commission training providers who have life experience of the field to provide specialist face-to-face training to our staff as required.

What did we do?

By now, training via the Remote Learning Environment (RLE) has taken hold and we have started to use it in the field of equality. We have provided on-line training for some services and this training is now available for other services.

We have found that it is difficult to find Welsh-medium, ready-made training and we have been unable to find an e-module to use. This has forced us to consider alternative methods. Therefore, we decided to adapt the one we already have whilst waiting to see if Welsh Government has any guidance in light of the race, LGBT+ and disability action plans they are in the process of producing. This e-module is nearly ready to be published and it will be one of the core e-modules that will be mandatory for the entire workforce to complete. Our intention is to ensure that everyone receives basic information about the field.

We have volunteered to be part of the national 'digital learning' project that creates equality learning resources, in the hope that this will be a valuable addition to the 'package' of resources we have.

Our further priorities for 2022/23 will be to complete our Equality Training Framework, by creating training for Elected Members and managers on impact assessments and duties of the Equality Plan. We will also intertwine equality elements into a range of new training titles that support managers to lead teams and find better ways to promote the use of the non-mandatory training using the information we have gathered from the recent survey.

Action Point 2:

Elected Members have access to the Members' Portal, an electronic intranet which contains information about training and events relevant to them. Over the period of the Plan, we will update the Portal with training guidelines and information relevant to equality. We will also hold a promotional campaign by using the Members' e-newsletter, 'Rhaeadr', to improve understanding about the information available on the Portal.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

We will update the Members' Portal, providing information on equality including information about the Council's and the Member's duties regarding equality and the new Socio-economic Duty.

What did we do?

The Members' Portal has been revamped and it includes information on equality, the new socio-economic duty and the equality training. It will be further promoted to new Council Members from May onwards in order to explain their responsibility for equality. This action point has therefore been completed, other than the promotion work, which is ongoing.

Action Point 3:

'Ffordd Gwynedd' is the name given to the way we in Gwynedd Council will ensure that we place the people of Gwynedd at the heart of everything we do. We aim to create a situation in which individuals' experiences when they come into contact with the Council will be positive and meet their needs. In moving forward, we will continue to work on strengthening the equality element as part of the 'Ffordd Gwynedd' training. This will also be the case for the Welcome to the Council sessions for new staff members.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

The work noted above was completed in 2020/21.

Objective 2:

Improve the information we have from and about people with protected characteristics.

Action Point 1:

In order to understand any barriers that the residents of Gwynedd who have various protected characteristics may face when dealing with the Council, we will conduct a comprehensive public survey. The survey will identify those barriers and what we could do to respond. This work will include a variety of different methods in order to reach a cross-section of people, especially those who do not usually participate. We will ensure confidentiality for all participants.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

To complete the survey and move on to part 2 of the work, working with groups who haven't yet taken part in the survey.

What did we do?

Although the Covid-19 crisis meant that our way of working had to be adapted, and that the timetable has also significantly changed, we were able to complete an on-line survey by 30 April. The aim of the exercise was to find out if the people of Gwynedd faced barriers or unfairness when dealing with the Council. We have completed the analysis and started to act on the main messages internally but the findings have not yet been shared. Responses showed that a substantial majority of Council users felt that they were treated fairly when receiving services. On the other hand, respondents had provided a great many observations to help us to improve our services.

This survey, as well as the staff survey, also informed us of ways to improve our employment arrangements (see Objectives 4 and 5).

We will now proceed to complete the work required on the analysis, and the work deriving from the responses. We are now of the opinion that this work should be an integral part of the work programme moving forward.

Action Point 2:

We will work to develop more contact with groups or individuals who have protected characteristics, by continuing to work with the Equality Core Group and extending it. Contact must be made with additional groups of people with specific protected characteristics in order to continue to receive various views. We will also take further steps to ensure that our Residents' Panel includes a variety of people with protected characteristics, by targeting as required.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

No specific timetable has been set for this work so we are expected to act annually.

What did we do?

The work of communicating with organisations has continued during 2021-22. A number of groups have shown interest in joining and have been placed on the mailing list. Unfortunately, the numbers attending the meetings were disappointing. We will work in 2022-23 to improve this and to seek alternative ways of holding the meeting that will attract more attendees.

In addition, it is planned to work with the Gwynedd Self Advocacy Group of the North Wales Advocacy and Counselling Service to create an easy-to-read version of the Our Area questionnaire and approach protected characteristics groups such as GISDA LHDTTC+ Group, Gwynedd Active Dementia and North Wales Pride in Bangor to promote the questionnaire.

Action Point 3:

By working with managers and heads of departments, we will ensure that everyone who works for the Council understands the needs of people with specific protected characteristics. We will use the information gathered to improve our services and create Equality Impact Assessments. Our Access/Equality Policy will need to be reviewed, whilst also considering the operational recommendations of the Equality Core Group.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

This action point was ongoing work but we set a goal of reviewing the Access/Equality Policy by January 2022.

What did we do?

It was decided to bring the Access and Equality Policy together in one document and that Equality and Inclusion Policy was approved by the Cabinet in July 2021. It is therefore operational and provides guidance for staff members on approaches to ensure that obstacles are eliminated.

The work of promoting equality messages among staff is ongoing.

Objective 3:

Build on the work already carried out to embed Equality Impact Assessments as a tool to ensure better decision-making.

Action Point 1:

We will set up specific additional training for relevant staff and Elected Members. It will focus on the advantages of an Equality Impact Assessment and provide guidance and advice on undertaking them in order to give full consideration to any potential impacts on the residents of Gwynedd. The content of the training will be regularly reviewed in order to ensure that it is up to date.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

Set up specific training on the impact assessment of a new/adapted policy or procedure for Members.

What did we do?

The North Wales Public Sector Equality Network decided to create a regional template. The aim was to create a standard template that would be easier to use for partnership work and includes the new socio-economic duty as well as questions to comply with the Welsh Language Standards and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. We have adapted the template to be used in Gwynedd and it is being set on an electronic app to facilitate its use. It will be operational by the summer. Once this work is completed, we will be able to offer training on it.

There has been some slippage in the work's timetable because the technical expertise has been diverted to work on the Ukraine refugee project. Meanwhile we are using an interim template, which contains the necessary questions. The publication, promotion and training in regard to the new Impact Assessment template will be prioritised during 2022/23.

Action Point 2:

Over the coming years, we will strengthen arrangements by ensuring that Elected Members are increasingly confident to challenge the quality of Equality Impact Assessments as a natural part of their work in receiving reports/information as a basis for decision-making in the Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees and Performance Challenge meetings. The above training will be essential to ensure that this procedure works well, and we will provide guidelines for the various meetings.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

Complete the guidelines for Members who are members of different meetings whilst the rest of the work is ongoing.

What did we do?

It has not been possible to complete this work on the equality impact assessments and, therefore (see above), so we have been unable to complete the guidance for Members. Having said this, information on equality, including impact assessments, has been uploaded

on the new members' portal and guidance on the socio-economic duty has been provided to scrutiny workshops during 2021/22.

Training will be offered for Elected Members soon after the Council elections in May.

Action Point 3:

We will continue to work with Council Departments to ensure that due regard is given to equality requirements within any process of identifying savings or cuts. We will ensure that timely and high-quality Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken and that they contribute to the process of identifying any plans in order to recognise any negative implications that decisions on budgetary cuts will have for specific minority groups in Gwynedd and mitigate them where possible.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

There is no specific timetable for this work in the Equality Scheme. We are expected to act if relevant.

What did we do?

As there was no need to identify new savings or cuts in the period in question, no action has yet been required. However, Council staff and departments have received ongoing help and support with impact assessments in other fields, mainly by receiving individual help from the Equality Advisor

Objective 4:

Act to reduce the gender pay gap and identify any pay gap based on any other characteristic.

Action Point 1:

Over the next few years, we will focus on encouraging more staff to complete the optional equality data questionnaire in order to increase the amount of data we have on our workforce. This will allow us to set a baseline, identify gaps in our workforce and undertake audits based on other protected characteristics. We will employ various methods of doing this during the period of the Plan, including an advertising campaign and raising the awareness of staff members who are new to the self-service system.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

This is continuous, long-term work, therefore no specific work had been identified for this year.

What did we do?

As noted last year, the numbers that have provided this information are low, and this situation is also true in other public sector organisations. Following action, and with the support of Heads of Departments, the numbers are slowly increasing but further work is to be done to ensure that more information is shared. We have identified the areas that need the most work and we will continue to act to improve the situation. It is only then we will have sufficient information in order to identify any problems.

During the year we looked at the performance of each Department and collaborated with Head of Department to encourage staff to fill in the questionnaire or update it. We will tailor further activities to fit the situations of individual departments / workforces.

Action Point 2:

We will continue to conduct an annual audit on the wage gap between men and women, and, by collecting the data in accordance with Action Point 1, will work to develop our ability to undertake such an audit in relation to other protected characteristics. In addition, we will undertake a pay audit every three years in order to ensure that we continue to pay equal wages for the type of work being achieved. We will also work towards putting plans in place to reduce any gaps that emerge from the audit.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

Conduct an audit on the wage difference between men and women (*gender pay gap*) and undertake a gender-based pay audit (*equal pay audit*)

What did we do?

The independent consultant has carried out substantial work on the pay audit and by March 2022 we had received a first draft of the report. The work of further analysing the data continues with the intention of receiving the final report during the summer. We will consider the content of the report after we receive it and take action in line with the findings if necessary.

Action Point 3:

Work has also been ongoing as part of the Women in Leadership Project (one of the projects contained within the [Council Plan 2018-23](#)). We have identified that the number of women in management roles in the Council is disproportionately low, given that women form 70% of the entire workforce. The project's main objective is to increase the number of women who apply for and attain leadership positions within the Council by reviewing the conditions and the working environment in order to attract more women to undertake these posts in future.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

- Review the conditions and the working environment to ensure that we take the lead in encouraging Women in Leadership and identify and seek to remove any barriers that could prevent women from reaching leadership and management posts within the Council.
- Implement a work programme that includes introducing a programme to develop potential for women, carrying out an audit of our recruitment and appointment methods for managerial posts and creating a forum for female leaders and prospective leaders within the Council.

What did we do?

- As part of our practice as an organisation to mark International Women's Day on March 8th, we launched the first series of the Women in Leadership Development Program this year with 11 women from a cross section of departments and roles within the Council receiving a place. The feedback so far states that the program has been very useful to them and that they are benefiting from the experience. Some have even been promoted to senior positions during the program period.
- As well as internal experts we have also welcomed external speakers to contribute to the Programme; Alys Carlton - who runs the Active Motivation company, Dr Hanna Hopwood, Presenter, and Marian Evans, a renowned businesswoman named as *Inspirational Woman of the Decade*.
- An audit of our recruitment and appointment methods is being led by the Human Resources Team with full consultation with the members of the Women in Leadership Group before amending individual working conditions. This procedure will continue into next year.
- The popular "Chats over a Cuppa" meetings for female Elected Members as well as staff have continued with external speakers invited to contribute as well as some of our current internal female leaders.
- A new intranet page recording and promoting the project's activity has been designed and published during the year.
- An event was held for the men of the organisation on the 28th of June

Objective 5:

Act to attract a range of applicants for posts in order to increase the diversity of our workforce

Action Point 1:

We will use the information that has been gathered from the equality questionnaire (see Objective 4, Action Point 1) and will conduct research and engage with the public and our staff in order to discover any factors that prevent specific cohorts of people with protected characteristics from applying for jobs. We will also work to discover ways of encouraging them to apply, e.g. by advertising jobs on a wider level than the Council's website alone, in order to attract a broader range of applications.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

This work is continuous but by 2021/22 we aimed to complete the public survey to identify the barriers facing the people of Gwynedd who have different characteristics (in accordance with Objective 2, Action Point 1).

What did we do?

The consultation with the workforce and the public was completed during the year. We have not yet had the opportunity to fully act on the findings. This will be done as we work with Inclusive Employers (see point 3 below) to improve our policies and ways of working in order to give the necessary attention to equality characteristics.

In order to gather more information, we have decided to question those leaving Council employment whether they have experienced any obstacles. This system gives us the opportunity to gather the information continuously and it will lead to better data regarding trends. Earlier in the year, a pilot was undertaken in the Corporate Support Department. It is early days for that work, but the hope is that it will help us better understand if there are obstacles that people face when working for the Council. We will move on to establish similar arrangements more widely across the Council during 2022/23.

Action Point 2:

Collaborate with other public bodies within our region such as North Wales Police or Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board in order to address any barriers identified. This could also provide access to a wider range of people, bearing in mind that the equality profiles of all workforces are unlikely to be the same.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

This work is continuous therefore no specific work had been identified for this year.

What did we do?

The problems caused by Covid-19, along with staffing problems, have continued to delay this work. However, the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network has decided to make work on diversity within employment a priority in moving forward and has re-established a sub-group. The sub-group will also consider whether there is a need to adapt the way this work will now be undertaken. The area of workforce planning is an area that receives wider attention within the Council and improving recruitment will develop to be an important part of the project.

Action Point 3:

Prioritise working towards reaching Level 2 of the 'Disability Confident' scheme in order to be a 'Confident Employer' and look into becoming a Stonewall Champion.

What did we promise to do in 2021/22?

No specific work had been identified for this year.

What did we do?

The work of attaining Level 2 is progressing. We have already identified what needs to be achieved in order to reach Level 2 of the scheme, with the stages encompassing the following themes:

- Seeking to influence other organisations to be confident in terms of disability
- Ensure that staff have access to dedicated training in the field
- Continue to take action to eliminate obstacles that may be preventing development in jobs for disabled staff
- Further develop the opportunities available for disabled staff to be able to provide feedback, by encouraging conversations between managers and staff but also by developing specific networks.
- Further develop how we recruit and appoint disabled staff

We continue to hold Level 1 accreditation of the Disability Confident Scheme and are fully committed to reaching Level 2 as soon as practicable.

When researching the possibility of being a Stonewall Champion, it was decided that a slightly different and broader route should be followed in order to try to realise this objective. Our intention is to apply for Inclusive Employers accreditation, which will enable us to receive feedback on our work as an employer in the equality field, and ultimately to help us improve in the field. By following this route we will receive expert advice and feedback which will feed into a work plan for us as an employer. The process will start in late summer 2022.

Information

In accordance with the guidelines of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Gwynedd Council is required to report annually on the information we gather in the field of equality.

Staff Equality Details Monitoring

Because filling the form is optional (in accordance with the guidelines), not enough staff members have completed it. We have recognised this and are working to encourage more workers to complete it (Objective 4, Action Point 1). When we have sufficient information, we will be able to identify pay gaps, on a wider level than merely gender-based (Objective 4, Action Point 2) and see if action is needed to improve the diversity of our workforce (Objective 5). 48% of the workforce had completed the questionnaire compared to 41.8% last year.

Complaints and concerns

The Equality Adviser advises on any complaint made on the grounds of a protected characteristic or equality duty. We also look for patterns annually which may enable us to identify and learn lessons.

During 2021/22 we received 5 formal complaints about the Council's services and 2 about Byw'n lach. 4 were regarding disability, 2 regarding race (ie nationality) and one regarding gender. The number of complaints was insufficient to recognize any pattern and every complainant has received a response. In addition, a number of comments have been received, though questionnaires and independently, about the decision to raise a premium on holiday homes which also claim racism, on the basis of nationality, but they have not been noted in the numbers as they are talking about a decision that has been made by the Cabinet and are therefore not valid to be counted here. We will look at this further to establish if action is needed to better explain the Council's position.

Engagement

Although the Council often engages with the public on all sorts of topics, we have realised that we do not have enough specific information about the precise barriers facing the people of Gwynedd when engaging with the Council. Objective 2 addresses this).

We also collaborate with the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network, which is the group of equality officers of the region's public organisations, to engage regionally every 2 years normally but that has not happened during the year in question.

We also of course have access to information the government has collected e.g. for its Action Plans (or proposed Action Plans) in areas of race, LGBTQ+ and disability and other organisations including the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Quantitative Data

The North Wales Public Sector Equality Network, in conjunction with the Public Service Boards, created a regional data document in 2019/20 for the Equality Plan 2020-24. It was on the same lines as Welsh Government's *Is Wales Fairer?*. It shows that there is a lack of data available in some core fields on a county or regional level. It is likely that this partly derives from the low numbers. However, it contains useful information showing how the region or county compares with Wales as a whole in areas such as education, housing and socio-economic disadvantage. This lack of information at county level is something the Network will be looking into when moving forward, although there are no specific actions as yet.

Again, in addition, we have access to the information the Government has collected for various purposes, including the Action Plans and of course the information that will come from the 2021 Census will be very useful.

Using the information to meet the 3 aims of the general duty

The specific duties placed on public bodies by the Welsh Government say that we must explain how the information is used to meet the 3 aims of the general duty which are:

- abolish discrimination, harassment and unlawful persecution and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- promote equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The ways in which Gwynedd Council uses the above information to meet the above 3 aims include:

- **Improving the diversity of our workforce** - The information we collect from our staff questionnaire, together with information about the county in general, will be used for this purpose.
- **Staffing policies in specific areas** - The Council has a number of employment policies to prohibit harassment and victimization in the workplace and those are based on evidence e.g. whistleblowing policy and dignity at work policy, together with those to prevent discrimination in the workplace e.g. menopause policy and transgender policy.
- **Specific procedures** - We also of course have procedures to ensure respect and dignity towards the users of our services. The Equality and Inclusion Policy (see Objective 2) also outlines what needs to be done to ensure fairness for all and will be revised as necessary due to the evidence collected.
- **Impact assessment** - We are in the process of creating a new method of impact assessment as part of Objective 3. That of course includes consideration of the 3 goals and any assessment will have to be based on evidence. We will collect as much information as possible in one place as a resource for completing an assessment.

- **Day to day work** – Because each of us has at least 5 protected characteristics there is no part of the Council's work that does not contribute towards wellbeing on the basis of equality in some way. Services collect information in their own areas, and use the information above, in order to identify the best way to ensure equal opportunities for specific groups. Examples of this work can be found in our Press Releases which are available [here](#).
- **Training** – We will use the information to identify specific areas that need to be addressed. It is important that staff members are aware of the need to consider equality in their day to day work so the equality e-module, which is focused on the 3 goals, is mandatory training.

