

Draft Cyngor Gwynedd 2024-28 Equality Objectives

Introduction

The 2010 Equality Act, as implemented in Wales, places a duty on Cyngor Gwynedd to review our equality objectives every 4 years and include them in a Strategic Equality Plan. The Plan's intention is to show how the Council acts on the 3 equality aims during the four years in question, which are:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is 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 eight equality characteristics are Age, Gender Reassignment, Sex, Race, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Pregnancy and Maternity, Religion or Belief - including non-belief. Marriage and Civil Partnership is also protected, but not in the same way.

Furthermore, we have a duty to ensure that people's voices are heard, and their views are used, when deciding on these objectives. Cyngor Gwynedd is proud to comply with these duties and the Cabinet has decided that Ensuring Fairness for All is one of the Council's priorities.

The Council has already held an extended period of consultation. Various methods were used including a questionnaire in various formats and languages, with almost 600 responses received, and meetings were held with various relevant groups, using appropriate methods. The report on the consultation is attached.

As well as the views of people with life experiences of various equality characteristics, the Objectives need to be based on quantitative data. Four years ago, the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network, a regional organisation that Cyngor

Gwynedd equality officers belong to, commissioned a data document in order to complete the Objectives. This was done with a grant received by the North Wales Public Service Boards. That Document was based on the *Is Wales Fairer? 2017* document by the Commission for Equality and Human Rights. The Network has received a grant again this year and an update on the document has been created, namely *Equality in North Wales 2023: Data and Evidence Report*. This document collects the latest information from various sources and is very useful for creating the amended Objectives.

Another thing that we have used when forming the Equality Objectives is the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and the Welsh Government LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Queer, Questioning +) Action Plan. The Council is expected to conform with these plans and it makes sense to have equality matters all together in one Plan. We are also expecting a plan for the Disability protected characteristic, but it is not yet completed. Hence our use of the "Locked Out: liberating disabled people's lives and rights in Wales following COVID-19" report to also provide us with guidance, although that is mostly targeted towards the Welsh Government.

Another duty that came into force in 2021 was the Socio-Economic Duty. The duty does not solely relate to financial poverty here, but also matters such as digital poverty, living far away from services, lack of transport etc. Data shows that people who have certain equality characteristics are more likely to be in financial poverty than others, and that social matters such as the lack of transport is guaranteed to have a greater impact on them. Therefore, we believe that socio-economic matters are a part of the Objectives listed below.

We must also note that the Council has many other schemes, e.g., poverty, housing, Women in Leadership etc. and so we have taken care to avoid duplicating these schemes here.

What do we need you to do?

Using all the information above we have created draft Equality Objectives for 2024-28 and we will consult on them over the next period. These draft objectives can be seen below, and we would be grateful to hear your views on them. We are grateful to everyone who took part in the engagement before we formed the draft Objectives and we would be very grateful for your further input now we have created a draft. It is also just as important that you take part if you haven't contributed yet.

The best way to respond is by filling out the questionnaire. If this isn't possible, you can give your comments via e-mail (equality@gwynedd.llyw.cymru) or write to us (Equality Officers, Corporate Support Department, Council Offices, Shirehall Street, Caernarfon, LL55 1SH). You can also ask us to come and meet your organisation via the e-mail above or phone us on 01286 679708. You can also use these contact details if you need this document or questionnaire in a different format (e.g. easy read, large print) or in another language.

You can see the initial draft Equality Impact Assessment on the draft Equality Objectives for 2024-28 in order to provide your views on that as well.

Following the consultation, we will consider what has been shared with us, and adapt the Objectives as a result of this, before presenting them to the Council's Cabinet in March 2024 as part of the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28.

The Draft Equality Objectives for 2020-24

Objective 1 - Improve the diversity of our workforce and reduce pay gaps

Why have we chosen this objective?

Both points, one being to improve the diversity of our workforce and the other to reduce pay gaps, were separate Objectives in the 2020-24 Equality Plan.

Because it is required to include an objective on pay gaps, people were not asked to give their opinions on whether this objective should be included in the questionnaire. However, it was clear from conversations with people during the meetings held during the engagement that the objective was supported.

There was obvious support to include the objective on diversity in our workforce with 62.1% supporting its inclusion this time. The main observations in favour related to improving inclusiveness and diversity to attract the best applicants. On the other hand, some were against this, mainly because of view that there was too much emphasis on the Welsh language which prevented people from working for the council, and that finding the best person for the job was more important than seeking diversity.

There was a chance in the questionnaire to propose additional issues that should be included in the Objectives next time. Issues relating to employment were raised in answer to that question also. Additionally, it was an issue raised by the groups the equality officers met with during the consultation.

Our internal data is currently insufficient to show pay gaps except for the gap between genders, and improving that data is a part of the work that needs to be undertaken. When talking about Wales as a whole, data has not been found on every characteristic, but it is shown that pay gaps exist based on gender and disability. Data also shows that some groups of people are less likely to be employed e.g., disabled people and people from ethnic minority groups.

The Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and the LGBTQ+ Action Plan also note the need to take action regarding employment.

This Objective operates positively on Socio-Economic disadvantage by ensuring that groups that are paid less, or find it hard to obtain work, are encouraged to apply for and maintain jobs.

This local aim feeds into "Objective 2: We will take steps to ensure that we are an equal opportunities employer and that we reduce pay gaps", North Wales public organisations' objectives.

Which characteristics will be impacted?

This objective will have a positive impact on every protected characteristic, especially gender, race, and disability.

What will we do?

Action Points	Outcome	Timetable
Establish a staff forum with a focus on equality matters, as a method that staff can use to contribute to the field within the Council.	Staff contribute to developments.	2024
Review how we communicate with staff to ensure information is accessible and understandable for everyone; feedback was received from an external body that our documents were too complex and official.	Information, including employment policies, which are easy to understand and accessible.	2024/26
Set the aim and work towards being an innovative employer in this field, including addressing the following fields:	Member of the Disability Confident scheme, aiming for	Continuous – over the period of the plan

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the requirements within a job – provide opportunities for everyone in society. • How and where we advertise jobs. • Our image as an employer in our communities – be proactive in trying to attract people from all parts of society to work for Cyngor Gwynedd. <p>There is a strong link between our plans at this stage and another of the Council's corporate priorities, namely our project on Workforce Planning.</p>	<p>the highest level (Level 3) in the framework.</p> <p>To be recognised as an innovative employer in this broad field, for every equality characteristic.</p>	
<p>Continue to take steps to develop the awareness of managers and staff of this field fully, including equality, inclusion, neurodiversity, sexual harassment, respect and dignity in the workplace.</p>	<p>Managers and staff aware of equality and inclusion matters, knowing where to access advice on different aspects and using that information within their teams as required.</p>	<p>Continuous – over the period of the plan</p>
<p>Look at the way we explain and communicate the linguistic needs when advertising jobs in order to improve the understanding of potential candidates and the public about the need for skills in the Welsh language, and about the Council's statutory responsibilities to provide bilingual services.</p>	<p>Fewer complaints about the recruitment policy and discrimination, and a better understanding among the public of the linguistic requirements for jobs.</p>	<p>2024/27</p>

Conduct a pay gap audit annually, considering what steps to take to try and close the gap. Reach a situation where we can also conduct a pay gap audit on the grounds of disability and race.	Audit completed and feeds into the discussion on action steps.	Annual
Conduct an equal pay audit every three years	The audit has been completed	2025/26
Continue to try to improve the data about characteristics that are shared with us by our staff, as a basis for taking decisions in this important area.	The number of staff who share information with us is increasing, therefore strengthening the information we have about our workforce.	Continual

What is the difference we expect to make by the end of the period?

We will have established steps where staff can take part and offer ideas on how Cyngor Gwynedd as an employer can improve for people with equality characteristics. We will also take proactive steps to develop our image as an employer for people with equality characteristics, aiming to be innovative in the field. We will also ensure that our managers and staff have access to information to support them when dealing with employment matters that are associated with the field.

Objective 2 - To improve our data about people with equality characteristics

Why have we chosen this objective?

61.3% people felt that engagement was an important field according to the consultation. The reason for that was for the council to gain a better understanding of what needed to be improved and to recognise the needs of the community. It

was also said that the council would ensure continuous improvement within the Council. Those who disagreed said that they did not feel that the objective should be a priority of the council since it was not needed and could be expensive. Engagement was also a theme that appeared in the question about what other matters should be included in the objectives this time.

When collecting data, it was obvious that there was a lack of local information about a number of protected characteristics. It is likely that this is partly because of the low numbers. It is also obvious that many consultations take place and that we need to improve our way of operating.

The Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and the LGBTQ+ Action Plan note the need to act in this field as well and the government has established special services for doing so. The plans ask of us as public organisations to ensure that we collect data, especially in the Education, Social Care, Employment and Housing fields. See also the separate objectives for Employment (Objective 1), and Education (Objective 4).

Which protected characteristics will be impacted?

Every characteristic will be affected positively.

What will we do?

Action Points	Outcome	Timetable
Update our engagement in order to avoid duplication, by creating procedures and sharing results. Also strengthen diversity within the Residents Panel.	Engagement group to look at procedures Operate Improve the diversity of the Residents Panel	2024-25 Continuous 2024-25

Create an accessible system to see equality data in order to make it easier to use when changing policies and making plans.	Have an electronic process in place. Keep the information current	2024-26
Look to improve and update the data we have on Gwynedd in the Equality document in North Wales, filling in any gaps if possible.	Update data as appropriate	Continuous
Ensuring that we collect data that is as complete as possible about the equality characteristics of care service users, by identifying any gaps in what we already collect and taking action	A suitable recording system installed to promote the completion of equality data when the individual is happy to share it	September 2024
	Collect and fill in the equality data of cases that are already on our recording system where possible	Continuous

What is the difference that we intend to make by the end of the period?

We intend to improve the data that we have in order to use it when creating or changing policy or ways of working, and to give the people of Gwynedd a better service. We will also ensure that we have appropriate input from people with quality characteristics, being careful not to overwhelm them by constant questioning.

Objective 3

Ensure that the Council is an anti-discriminatory organisation by improving our internal systems to provide better services for everyone.

Why have we chosen this objective?

67.3% felt that training needed to be kept in the plan following the consultation. The reason for that was because people felt that training was important for staff skills and improved services. Some disagreed and said that it was unnecessary and expensive. According to the consultation, 57.6% people felt that assessing impact was important. The reason for that was that people felt that it would ensure the Council's continuous improvement and ensure fairness for people with protected characteristics. Those who disagreed said that it would be expensive and that other priorities were of greater importance. We agree with the majority that they are matters in need of attention, but because they have received consideration during the current Plan period, we have decided to include them as action points within the objective this time. Additional comments gave support for different types of training in the answers to the question "Do you believe we should consider including any other issues in our new objectives?" in the questionnaire as well.

There was a strong demand for us to look at accessibility issues, especially for disabled people, in the answers to this question as well, and a point of action is included here. This was also an issue raised by some of the groups that the equality officers visited as part of the engagement.

The other matters addressed in this Objective derive from information in the Anti-Racist Wales Equality Plan. But we have decided to extend this to include other characteristics as well.

Which characteristics will be affected?

Every characteristic will be affected positively.

What will we do?

Action Points	Outcome	Timetable
Continue with the training framework to give staff the resources and the confidence to be able to respond to a variety of needs with respect and dignity. Ensure that the training framework is extended to include a variety of equality characteristics / broad subjects.	Training on Disability, Respect and Dignity, and Anti-racism. Move to look at other equality characteristic matters and decide on the necessary subjects and take action.	2024-2025 Continuous
Raise staff awareness of the new Equality Impact Assessment procedure and provide support, information and training to ensure quality.	Training in place. Raising awareness	May 2024 Continuous
Survey the accessibility of the Council's services, create an action plan and act on it	Survey and action plan Act	2024-26 Plan period
Improve our website's accessibility by creating an action plan to resolve shortcomings, including working towards removing the use of PDF documents.	Action plan in place Act	2024-25 Continuous
The Museums and Arts Service will support and work with all parts of the communities in Gwynedd.		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By providing inclusive programmes for our various communities, be it exhibitions, activities, events, promotion opportunities, projects or grants. 	<p>Ensure that our work programmes and grants are designed with equality aims regularly / annually and not occasionally.</p> <p>Report by counting the number of increasing opportunities and narrative information on feedback forms.</p> <p>There is a need to create a system to record the improvements.</p>	<p>Continuous</p> <p>Continuous</p> <p>March 2024</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the narrative in our museums is appropriate (anti-racist etc.) and that people's stories and specific characteristics are heard. 	<p>Ensure that the designing of exhibitions include this narrative by increasing the number of exhibitions that are being updated; training received; studies and research needed; cooperate with councillors where need and introduce improvements.</p>	<p>This work is continuous and integrated into the work programme.</p> <p>Some elements have specific target dates such as the</p>

	<p>Response by engagement, customer satisfaction, response to complaints, staff training by identifying and reducing barriers. Needs a system to collect feedback.</p> <p>Actions needed will come from the feedback, and a timetable set</p>	<p>Shared Prosperity Fund scheme to re-interpret the Lloyd George Museum story December 2024 .</p> <p>Scope and aim to re-interpret Storiel's history gallery by 2028. Angen grant i wireddu</p> <p>Feedback collection arrangements in place by March 2024.</p> <p>This work is continuous and</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with communities of people with equality characteristics to get rid of barriers to use our museums and galleries.	<p>Further assessments to be arranged.</p>	<p>the aim is to integrate into the work programme</p> <p>Specific engagement with the Lloyd George Museum re-interpretation plan by December 2024.</p> <p>There will be a need for further engagement with the reinterpretation of Storiel's history galleries between 2024-2028</p>
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What is the difference we are making?

Our intention here is to ensure that the Council's arrangements are appropriate for every equality characteristic and that our staff understand and accept their responsibility in the field. We will ensure a better understanding of the rights and needs of people with various characteristics by creating a variety of training titles. Also, that consideration of equality characteristics has the platform that it deserves when creating and changing policies and ways of working through our Equality Impact Assessment procedure. We will ensure that people receive the information that they need by making our website easier to use. Our Museums and Arts Service will build on what is already in place for communities to be able to contribute their voices to our museums' narratives, have more opportunities, fewer barriers and be able to contribute even more to their culture through enjoyment, learning, and health and well-being improvements.

Objective 4

Improve equality within the field of education.

Why have we chosen this objective?

This objective is a new one this time. There is a duty on every school, as organisations named in the Equality Act 2010, to update their Strategic Equality Plan every four years in the same way as the Council. We believe that it is beneficial to have a relationship between the Council's Equality Scheme and those of the individual schools. The Authority has therefore proposed 4 Objectives for the schools for them to interpret them in a way that is suitable locally. Schools are encouraged to add to these 4 Objectives also, depending on local factors. The 4 Objectives for the schools appear here as action points for the Authority.

The data, although it is now a little bit dated, shows that bullying issues persist, and that some cohorts underachieve within the education system. More recent data shows that children and young people have problems with well-being and mental health conditions due to Covid-19.

The action points also derive from information in the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan. But we have decided to look at the field as a whole as opposed to one characteristic specifically.

Which aims will be impacted?

The following characteristics will be positively affected - age, race, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion, disability.

What will we do?

Action Points	Outcome	Timetable
Collect, analyse and act on data related to cases of bullying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gwynedd schools reporting electronically on cases relating to bullying every term (3 times a year). • The education department to analyse the data seasonally by using the findings to draw up a plan / training provision. 	Establish in January 2024 and to be implemented every term.

<p>Reduce costs and barriers to education and implement a range of Mental Health and Well-being interventions in order support learners, whatever their background and protected characteristics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and share questionnaires with schools. • Schools to receive a report regarding local findings. • The education department to support schools to adapt school arrangements and procedures by creating a resource to support families in the community. 	<p>November 2023</p> <p>January 2024</p> <p>2024 onwards</p>
<p>Identify, Monitor and Act to improve attendance and achievement of various groups of students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance to be promoted and monitored across the schools of Gwynedd weekly. • A target of 95% to be implemented across the schools of Gwynedd. • Attendance data (including various groups) to be analysed in order to identify and implement aspects for development. 	<p>November 2023 and continuous</p> <p>Continuous</p> <p>Continuous</p>

<p>Ensure effective procedures of identifying and acting on pupil's voices within the daily running of the School, regardless of their protected characteristics and needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gwynedd Youth Forum has been established in order to hear students' voices across Gwynedd schools, regardless of their protected characteristics and needs to be considered on the political and corporate level of the authority. 	<p>2024 onwards</p>
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What is the difference that we are doing?

Our intention is to ensure education equality and an opportunity for all pupils, staff, parents, and carers who receive services from our schools, regardless of their protected characteristics and their needs. By improving equality within education, we will develop a culture of inclusion and diversity where every pupil connected to Gwynedd schools feel proud of their identity and can participate fully in school life. Pupil attainment will be monitored, and we will use the data to support pupils, raise standards and ensure inclusive education. We will tackle discrimination by facilitating and supporting schools to positively promote equality, challenge bullying and stereotypes and create an environment that encourages respect towards all. In Gwynedd, we believe that diversity is a strength, and should be respected and celebrated by everyone within and outside of the schools.

Effect on the Welsh Language

We are required, under Part 4 of The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 when creating a consultation document, to consider and seek opinions on the effects of the Objectives on people's opportunities to use the Welsh language, and to ensure that we don't treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English, and to also look at how we can adapt the policy to improve this. The work set out in Objective 1 to look at the requirements in positions and to create a staff forum includes linguistic elements and means a better understanding within the Council and the wider community about linguistic requirements when recruiting and the Council's statutory responsibilities under the Standards. Also the work to improve our website in Objective 3. For more information see the Impact Assessment.