



Strategic Equality Plan

2 April 2012

This document is available in other formats on request.

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this Strategic Equality Plan is to describe what the Council is doing to fulfil its duties in respect of the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (general duty) and the specific duties for Wales.

The public sector equality duty covers eight protected characteristics:

Age	Race
Disability	Religion or Belief
Gender Reassignment	Sex
Pregnancy and Maternity	Sexual Orientation

It applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

The Council is a listed public authority as defined in the Equality Act, and this means that when carrying out its public function, it must have due regard 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; and
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

Having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- removing or minimising disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics;
- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people; and
- encouraging people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The specific duties set out the steps that public authorities in Wales must take to demonstrate that they are paying due regard to the general duty. They cover:

Objectives	Staff training
Strategic Equality Plans	Procurement
Engagement	Annual reporting
Assessing impact	Publishing
Equality information	Welsh Ministers' reporting
Employment information	Review
Pay differences	Accessibility

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

This Strategic Equality Plan explains what action the Council takes, and plans to take, to meet these duties.

It has used feedback from people living in the Vale of Glamorgan to identify the priorities for improving the way services are provided to them, taking into account their protected characteristics.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

The Vale of Glamorgan Council covers 33,097 hectares with 53 kilometres of coastline including 19 kilometres of Heritage coast. The Vale consists of both urban centres and rural communities, with a diverse population.

The principles described in the general duty must underpin the wide range of services that the Council provides:

Living Recycling and Waste Traffic and Highways Planning Schools Housing Environment Transport Social Care	Working Business rates Education and skills Regeneration Licensing Business support Environmental health Trading standards
Enjoying Community Centres Coast Parks and Gardens Arts and Culture Events Leisure and Activities Libraries	Our Council Consultation Complaints and compliments Housing benefits Press office Council Council Tax Jobs Properties for sale or let

The Council is committed to ensuring that everyone in the Vale of Glamorgan is able to obtain fair and equal access to these services, receiving equitable and consistent treatment in their dealings and employment with the Council.

There is a commitment in the Council's Corporate Plan 2010 – 2014 to foster a strong, healthy and just society by meeting the diverse needs of people living in the Vale of Glamorgan, promoting personal well-being, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunity.

Equality Information

The Council has used a variety of sources to gather information to produce this plan and the equality objectives.

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

It has used:

- national research such as 'How Fair is Wales' and the 'Not Just Another Statistic' reports;
- information from Council documents such as its Community Strategy, Corporate Plan, and Single Equality Scheme;
- local information and data;
- feedback from people representative of one or more of the protected groups invited to engagement events and focus groups during October and November 2011 to help us develop and prioritise equality objectives.

Organisations involved in the engagement events can be found in the summary of feedback provided in Appendix 1.

The Council is committed to improving the way it collects and analyses data so that there is a consistent approach across the organisation and that any information gaps can be addressed. This is reflected in one of its objectives. It needs to do this for both equality and employment information. This work has already begun and information will be published on the equality pages of the Council's website as it becomes available.

Equality Objectives

The Council must set and publish equality objectives at least every four years. These objectives are to be developed by involving people representative of one or more of the protected groups (as listed above).

Engagement events were held in November 2011 to hear the views of representative groups and to ask for feedback on some draft objectives to help shape the Council's priorities.

The comments made by residents during the engagement suggest that the draft objectives were well focused and addressed issues that are of priority to residents in the Vale. The results of the consultation appear to confirm that the research data gathered nationally (and that was used to draft the objectives) mirrors the experience of Vale residents.

It was important to those involved to write the objectives in a way that makes them clear and easily understandable and that they reflect the issues most commonly raised by participants.

It was also important to people that the Strategic Equality Plan makes clear how the delivery of the objectives will be assessed and monitored and how this information would be communicated to residents. Communication on progress will be achieved through annual reporting.

There was general agreement that a number of actions would assist all people with protected characteristics and that these should be prioritised. These were:

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

- improved understanding of the issues that affect people with protected characteristics;
- improved understanding of who is using services;
- improved access to services;
- improved confidence in reporting discrimination and harassment;

Additionally, there is an objective on improving the way the Council collects and analyses data so that there is a consistent approach across the organisation and that any information gaps can be addressed.

During the engagement on draft objectives, the Council discussed with representative groups the issues around accessible learning opportunities to develop skills and enhance employability.

Work related to improving learning opportunities has been identified in the Community Strategy 2011 -21 and the Corporate Plan 2010 – 14 (revised December 2011) and at this stage, it has not been prioritised as an equality objective. Rather, the Council is focusing on equality objectives that relate to the four areas above and impact on each of the protected characteristics, as well as one relating to the issue of domestic violence which is a national priority.

As a result of engagement, the following objectives have been prioritised.

Collecting Data to Monitor Access to Services

1. Publish data by 31 March 2013 to show how services across the Council are being used by people from protected groups, and use this information to plan and implement improved use of and access to services by 31 December 2013. Evaluate progress by 30 April 2015.

Why are we going to do it?	
Equality Information	Source
Participants in all stages of the consultation felt that gathering effective monitoring data is essential to identifying discrimination.	Council engagement events – November 2011
With any increase in collecting monitoring data it must be clear from the outset why we are collected data and what it will be used for.	Council engagement events – November 2011
The same process/categories must be used across all services.	Council engagement events – November 2011

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

There are currently gaps in the equality information available and protected characteristics are not being monitored consistently.	Council data
“Gaps in the evidence mean relatively little is known about inequality faced by people of different religious faiths or lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, and also about Gypsy Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers. The lack of evidence and the small size of the groups concerned does not mean, of course, that there are no inequalities to be addressed. What evidence there is suggests many of these groups face inequality and discrimination, for example higher rates of bullying and harassment.”	How Fair is Wales
“Better use of existing data sources, and more sophisticated data collection techniques, would allow us to understand better the various needs and aspirations of different people. This is prerequisite to understanding whether and how we are making progress as a society towards greater equality.”	How Fair is Wales

How are we going to do it?		
Action	By Whom	Timescale
Produce standard monitoring form with guidance on collecting and monitoring equality data for use throughout the Council.	Corporate Equality Officer	2 April 2012 - 30 April 2012
Review Services' data collection on protected characteristics across the Council, identify gaps and establish system for collating information for a corporate overview and annual reporting.	Corporate Equality Officer	30 April 2012 – 30 June 2012
Work with Heads of Service to develop action plans to improve data collection and reporting where there are information gaps to facilitate regular analysis of how services are used by each protected group.	Corporate Equality Officer.	1 July 2012 – December 2012
Implement action plan to deliver improvements to data gathering, analysis and reporting on service use by protected characteristic.	Heads of Service	1 January 2013 – 31 March 2016
Design and implement campaign to help people understand what we are doing and why in respect of monitoring use of services by protected characteristic.	Corporate Equality Officer Communi-	1 September 2012 - 31 January 2013

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

	communications Manager	
Identify actions in service plans to improve use of and access to services, taking into account issues raised during engagement on equality objectives and involving representatives of people from protected groups to assist. Action plan to include targets for improving levels of use for each protected characteristic.	Heads of Service; Improvement and Development Team	31 October 2012 – 31 March 2013
Evaluate whether actions have improved access for protected groups and identify if further action needed.	Heads of Service	1 April 2014 - 30 June 2014

Which protected characteristics does it cover?			
Age	√	Race	√
Disability	√	Religion or Belief	√
Gender Reassignment	√	Sex	√
Marriage and Civil Partnership	√	Sexual Orientation	√
Pregnancy and Maternity	√		

Improve Accessibility to Public Documents

- Review and improve guidance on writing documents by 30 November 2012 so that they can be read easily by people with the general public, and introduce a system by 31 March 2013 that allows only easy to read documents to be published.

Why are we going to do it?	
Equality Information	Source
All information must be made available in an accessible format. Too often information is not delivered in understandable language. This is the case for age, ethnicity, disability – potential service users cannot understand a lot of the information that is publicly available. Accessing information on Housing Services is particularly difficult.	Council engagement events – November 2011
A great deal of information is available on websites but this is not an appropriate format for many residents.	Council engagement

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

	events – November 2011
There are a number of voluntary groups and support services operating in the Vale and Cardiff, however, these are not well promoted. There needs to be better signposting of information.	Council engagement events – November 2011
Plain language is essential to improving access.	Council engagement events – November 2011

How are we going to do it?		
Action	By Whom	Timescale
Review and improve guidance on writing easy to read documents, liaising with voluntary organisations with expertise in this area to assist.	Communi- cations Manager	2 April 2012 – 30 November 2012
Develop and implement controls to ensure only documents meeting these standards are published.	Communi- cations Manager	1 December 2012 – 31 March 2013
Develop and publish new guidance on producing easy to read documents.	Communi- cations Manager	1 January 2013 – 1 April 2013
Raise staff awareness of new guidance.	Communi- cations Manager	1 April 2013 - 30 June 2013
Review documents published since the introduction of the new standards to evaluate whether there has been an improvement and take appropriate action to maintain new standards.	Communi- cations Manager	1 July 2014 – 30 September 2014

Which protected characteristics does it cover?			
Age	√	Race	√
Disability	√	Religion or Belief	√
Gender Reassignment	√	Sex	√
Marriage and Civil Partnership	√	Sexual Orientation	√
Pregnancy and Maternity	√		

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

Raising Awareness

3. Raise awareness of the general and specific public sector equality duties and of issues affecting people with protected characteristics amongst Council staff and residents of the Vale of Glamorgan by 31 March 2016.

Why are we going to do it?	
Equality Information	Source
Staff must be trained to better understand individuals' needs. This is the only path to mutual awareness and respect.	Council engagement events – November 2011
Focus groups felt that, particularly for this objective, the Vale of Glamorgan Council should set the standard for the area and represent a model of good practice.	Council engagement events – November 2011
Focus groups were in agreement that any programme of raising awareness would have to be incremental and targeted rather than a blanket programme on 'equality issues'.	Council engagement events – November 2011
The level of knowledge and support for all disability issues across public service providers varies greatly. This should be universal.	Council engagement events – November 2011
Raising awareness of individuals needs is essential. Staff do not understand the issues affecting potential service users and so can be afraid of either putting clients at risk or offending them or others – this is never a serious risk.	Council engagement events – November 2011
As a top priority everyone highlights the need to change attitudes and behaviours through awareness-raising and through education. People feel that changing public perceptions of the issues is a task for a wide range of players.	Not Just Another Statistic
Most people talked about how important staff attitudes are in relationships with public services. They said that simpler systems acknowledging one size doesn't fit all would be a big step forward.	Not Just Another Statistic

How are we going to do it?		
Action	By Whom	Timescale

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

Analyse the training needs of Members, Managers and staff so that equality training can be targeted appropriately.	Corporate Equality Officer	1 April 2012 – 31 August 2012
Design a training programme that raises awareness of issues relating to each protected characteristic, and includes training on dealing with reports of harassment.	Corporate Equality Officer	1 September 2012 - 31 October 2012
Begin to implement equality training programme.	Corporate Equality Officer	1 January 2012 – 31 March 2016
Design and implement a process to evaluate the effectiveness of equality training.	Corporate Equality Officer	1 January 2013 - 31 March 2013
Design public awareness campaign to help promote understanding of protected characteristics.	Communications Manager and Corporate Equality Officer	1 January 2013 - 31 March 2013
implement public awareness campaign to help promote understanding of protected characteristics.	Communications Manager and Corporate Equality Officer	From 1 April 2013
Evaluate whether the public awareness campaign has been effective.	Communications Manager / Corporate Equality Officer	1 April 2014 – 30 June 2014

Which protected characteristics does it cover?			
Age	√	Race	√
Disability	√	Religion or Belief	√
Gender Reassignment	√	Sex	√
Marriage and Civil Partnership	√	Sexual Orientation	√
Pregnancy and Maternity	√		

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

Involvement of People with Protected Characteristics

4. Develop engagement and consultation guidance by 31 March 2013 on involving people with protected characteristics in developing, reviewing or changing services, evaluating results by 31 July 2015.

Why are we going to do it?	
Equality Information	Source
There is a perception that consultation is sometimes reactive. Instead there should be an ongoing dialogue with service users.	Council engagement events – November 2011
Advocacy services are essential to including all sections of the community and involving residents from protected groups in decision making.	Council engagement events – November 2011
The views and opinions of both young and older people are often dismissed on the basis of age.	Council engagement events – November 2011
Spending on older people is disproportionately low. Reasons for this should be made clear.	Council engagement events – November 2011
For disabled residents physical access is still a major issue. Many buildings do not have effective ramps, working hearing loops, for example. It is almost impossible to get most private businesses involved. Access aids integration.	Council engagement events – November 2011
"...the evidence... suggests that those from protected groups are yet to fully participate in decision making or to exert the same power and influence that some groups have enjoyed for decades.	How Fair is Wales
Many people spoke about the role of advice and advocacy as a life-line in coping with everyday tasks and in understanding rights.	Not Just Another Statistic

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

How are we going to do it?		
Action	By Whom	Timescale
Develop guidance on involving people with protected characteristics in developing, reviewing or changing services and making decisions that affect services, including feedback to them on the results of their involvement.	Corporate Equality Officer	2 April 2012 – 31 December 2012
Raise staff awareness of guidelines throughout the Council.	Corporate Equality Officer	1 January 2013 - 31 March 2013
Evaluate and report on whether guidance has resulted in people with protected characteristics being more involved in decisions about services.	Corporate Equality Officer	1 April 2015 – 31 July 2015

Which protected characteristics does it cover?			
Age	√	Race	√
Disability	√	Religion or Belief	√
Gender Reassignment	√	Sex	√
Marriage and Civil Partnership	√	Sexual Orientation	√
Pregnancy and Maternity	√		

Harassment and Discrimination Reporting

- Increase use of hate crime helpline and complaints system to report harassment and discrimination of people with protected characteristics and evaluate success by 31 March 2016.

Why are we going to do it?	
Equality Information	Source
There have been only five reports since the launch of the hate crime helpline in September 2009.	Council information
Focus groups felt that, as it is not just disabled residents that are victims of harassment..... It was felt that the wording of the objective should perhaps refer to harassment of individuals with protected characteristics.	Council engagement events – November 2011

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

It was also felt thatraising awareness of services to address/prevent harassment should result in higher levels of reporting and so this would appear to result in an increase in incidences of domestic violence.	Council engagement events – November 2011
It was suggested that “increased confidence to report harassment” or “work to improve reporting of who is being harassed by who” (or words to that effect) would be effective.	Council engagement events – November 2011
A lot of people do not recognise what ‘harassment’ actually is. This must be addressed.	Council engagement events – November 2011
Many residents do not feel they can complain about incidences of discrimination in case they receive a lower quality of service in the future.	Council engagement events – November 2011
Many individuals with protected characteristics often feel as though their comments/complaints/opinions are dismissed by public bodies – this is indirect discrimination.	Council engagement events – November 2011
“Young men and ethnic minority groups have the greatest risk of being a victim of violent crime in general, with women being by far at the greatest risk of sexual violence (including rape) and of domestic abuse. Women, disabled people, older people, ethnic minority groups and people from lower socio-economic groups are most likely to fear violent crime.”	How Fair is Wales
Low levels of confidence lead to significant under-reporting of hate crime and often justice is not achieved. Preventing hate crime is an essential step in building good relations between groups in society. Where hate crime occurs, increasing reporting rates is an urgent task.	How Fair is Wales
People from ethnic minority groups, disabled people, lesbian, gay and bisexual people and transgender people are all at risk from hate crime and bullying.	How Fair is Wales
Many people report that they experience discrimination, harassment and abuse. About 10% of the population as a whole has experienced an incident of discrimination, harassment or victimisation in the last five years. Some groups, such as young people, disabled people,	How Fair is Wales

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

lesbian, gay and bisexual people, refugees and asylum seekers, transgender people, people with mental health conditions and older people report very much higher levels of discrimination and harassment – up to a third of all disabled 16-39 year olds said they had been the victim of discrimination or harassment.	
Incidents targeting people because of who they are (for example, hate crimes) are under-reported, meaning many victims are unable to access the support they need, or to secure justice.	How Fair is Wales
Many people spoke about the role of advice and advocacy as a life-line in coping with everyday tasks and in understanding rights.	Not Just Another Statistic

How are we going to do it?		
Action	By Whom	Timescale
Review use of hate crime help line to establish current benchmark of use and identify barriers to reporting hate crimes.	Corporate Equality Officer/ Operational Manager – Customer Relations	1 January 2013 – 30 June 2013
Review hate crime reporting system and incorporate the capacity to record protected characteristics (where this can be done confidentially and sensitively) so that it can reports can be analysed by these characteristics.	Corporate Equality Officer/ Operational Manager – Customer Relations	1 January 2013 – 30 June 2013
Develop an action plan to improve use of the hate crime help line, and how this information is used to reduce incidents of harassment.	Corporate Equality Officer/ Operational Manager – Customer Relations	1 July 2013 – 30 September 2013
Develop and implement an awareness campaign to promote the hate crime help line, including guidance on what constitutes harassment and how use of advocacy services can be accommodated.	Corporate Equality Officer/ Operational Manager – Customer	1 October 2013 – 31 March 2014

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

	Relations	
Evaluate whether the action plan and awareness campaign has achieved an improvement in use of hate crime help line and actions taken to tackle harassment.	Corporate Equality Officer/ Operational Manager – Customer Relations	1 April 2014 – 30 June 2014
Review complaints system to determine and recommend how best to monitor the protected characteristics of complainants, make it easily accessible by protected groups and consider use of advocacy.	Complaints Officers	1 April 2012 – 31 December 2012
Implement recommendations and regularly monitor use by protected characteristic.	Complaints Officers	1 April 2013 – 31 March 2016
Promote complaints system to general public, including how complaints of discrimination are dealt with, and why protected characteristics are monitored.	Complaints Officers	1 September 2012 – 31 August 2013
Evaluate whether the complaints system is being used more by people with protected characteristics.	Complaints Officers	1 September 2013 – 31 December 2013

Which protected characteristics does it cover?			
Age	√	Race	√
Disability	√	Religion or Belief	√
Gender Reassignment	√	Sex	√
Marriage and Civil Partnership	√	Sexual Orientation	√
Pregnancy and Maternity	√		

Domestic Violence

- Increase awareness and confidence in use of domestic abuse support services by 31 March 2016.

Why are we going to do it?	
Equality Information	Source

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

The number of serious sexual offences in the Vale of Glamorgan has increased compared to 2009-10. For the majority of cases the suspect is known to the victim and is usually a family member, acquaintance or friend.	Community Strategy 2011-21
Increase the awareness of domestic abuse support services.	Council's Corporate Plan 2010 – 14 (revised December 2011)
One in four women in England and Wales has experienced some form of domestic abuse since reaching the age of 16.	How Fair is Wales
Three-quarters of domestic abuse offences are repeat offences.	How Fair is Wales
Women in Wales are twice as likely as men to be victims of sexual violence, or of non-sexual violence by their partner or family.	How Fair is Wales

How are we going to do it?		
Action	By Whom	Timescale
Review how services are accessed by people with protected characteristics and address barriers, including use of professional translators, not family or friends.	Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator	2 April 2012 - 31 December 2012
Develop an action plan to remove significant barriers to using services that deal with domestic violence.	Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator	1 January 2013 – 31 March 2013
Implement action plan to remove barriers to using services that deal with domestic violence.	Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator	1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014
Design campaign to raise awareness of support services available and types of actions taken in relation to reports of domestic violence, including signposting to voluntary organisations.	Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator	1 January 2013 – 31 March 2013
Implement campaign to raise awareness of support services available.	Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator	1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014
Regularly monitor and report on use of	Domestic	From 1 April

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

support services and use information to increase target usage.	Abuse Co-ordinator	2013
Review how services are accessed by people with protected characteristics.	Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator	1 April 2014 - 30 June 2014
Develop and implement action plan that removes identified barriers that continue to stop people from using services.	Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator	1 July 2014 – 30 September 2014
Continue to monitor and report on how services are being used by people with protected characteristics.	Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator	1 October 2012 – 31 December 2015
Evaluate whether actions and awareness raising campaigns have been successful and recommend how to move forward.	Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator	1 September 2015 - 31 December 2015
Report on evaluation, including to people with protected characteristics.	Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator	1 January 2016 – 31 March 2016

Which protected characteristics does it cover?			
Age	√	Race	√
Disability	√	Religion or Belief	√
Gender Reassignment	√	Sex	√
Marriage and Civil Partnership	√	Sexual Orientation	√
Pregnancy and Maternity	√		

Gender Pay Difference

The Council must develop an equality objective to address any gender pay gap identified. This objective must address the causes of this pay difference where it seems reasonably likely to be related to gender.

The Council undertook an equality impact assessment of its proposed job evaluation process and pay and grading structure. This identified that there will be a gender pay gap of 10.94%, significantly less than that seen in similar Councils and comparable with the Annual Survey of Household earnings for the economy as a whole. The Equality and Human Rights Commission expect that a gap of more than 5% should be investigated.

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

The main reason for the continued pay gap is due to the composition of the workforce – 75.8% female and 24.2% male, with a higher proportion of female employees concentrated in a small number of jobs at the lower levels of the pay structure.

The job evaluation process makes sure that there is a fair and systematic approach to deciding on pay for a job but it cannot deal with issues arising from occupational segregation.

Occupational segregation is where there is a concentration of men and women in different kinds of jobs (horizontal segregation) or in different grades (vertical segregation). These kinds of segregation happen for a number of reasons, including:

- gender stereotyping – where males and females work in jobs that males and females have traditionally worked in, where typically, the jobs done by women are in lower pay grades;
- inflexible working – where women with children or caring responsibilities are constrained in finding work that allows them to fulfil their caring responsibilities, so they are often forced into part-time, low paid work;

The Council cannot overcome the wide range of factors in society that lead to occupational segregation and a gender pay difference. However, it can play a part by identifying what it reasonably can do within the scope of its work.

To this end, the Council is committed to the following equality objective to address the gender pay difference:

7. Develop a workforce plan by 31 December 2013 with actions to reduce the gender pay gap by 31 December 2015; evaluate progress and plan the next stage of action by 31 March 2016.

Why are we going to do it?	
Equality Information	Source
The impact assessment of the job evaluation scheme shows a gender pay gap of over 10% and recommends workforce strategies to be what has been achieved through the job evaluation system.	Equality Impact Assessment
Occupational segregation – the concentration of different groups in to specific occupations – can be horizontal, across different sectors of the job market, and vertically, between different levels of the same sector. The review of research evidence found marked occupational segregation in Wales across all protected characteristics, although the quality and timeliness of the data was variable.	How Fair is Wales

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

There is some evidence that occupational segregation by gender is higher in Wales than in the rest of Britain.	
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How are we going to do it?		
Action	By Whom	Timescale
Develop a workforce plan that contains actions that to reduce the gender pay gap.	Head of Human Resources.	2 April 2012 - 31 December 2013
Implement action plan to reduce gender pay difference and report annually on progress.	Head of Human Resources.	1 January 2014 – 31 December 2015
Evaluate progress and produce new action plan.	Head of Human Resources.	1 January 2016 – 31 March 2016

Which protected characteristics does it cover?			
Age		Race	
Disability		Religion or Belief	
Gender Reassignment		Sex	√
Marriage and Civil Partnership		Sexual Orientation	
Pregnancy and Maternity			

The Council will be better placed to identify whether additional objectives are needed to address the causes of pay differences arising from other protected characteristics when it has improved collection and analysis of employment information. A project team has been convened to address this.

Impact of Objectives on Protected Characteristics

Most of these objectives apply to each of the protected characteristics. If they are achieved, they will strengthen the foundation for meeting the general duty. The Council will understand and be better informed about what needs to be done next in respect of meeting the needs of protected groups.

It is for this reason that the Council will be prioritising these cross cutting objectives and not publishing one for each of the protected characteristics.

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

Monitoring and Publishing Results

Progress towards meeting the equality objectives will be evaluated and reported on annually to the senior management team, Equality Consultative Forum and Cabinet.

The annual report will be published on the Council's website. This will include an assessment of the effectiveness of the steps it is taking to meet the equality objectives.

Other equality and employment information will also be published annually on the Council's website.

Assessing Impact

The Council has a well established process for evaluating the likely impact on protected groups of any policies or practices being proposed, reviewed or revised. The process has been updated to include all the protected characteristics.

The assessment tool and published examples can be found on the Equality page of the Council's website.

It has been used to assess the likely impact of the annual budget and identify what level of risk there is that decisions are likely to have a significant impact on protected groups, so that a full assessment of impact can be undertaken where appropriate.

Where there is a significant impact, the Council publishes the details on its website.

The Council has begun to work on impact assessments of functions and is building on the learning from this approach to continuously improve the process.

Training

The Council provides an equalities training programme to ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to equality and are able to deal appropriately with all those with whom they come into contact. The following courses are provided:

- Cultural diversity
- Disability equality
- Visual awareness
- Deaf awareness
- British Sign Language
- Mental health awareness
- Women's development programmes
- Mentoring scheme

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

In addition to the equality training programme, equality issues are covered in corporate training, particularly in corporate induction and recruitment training.

The equality training programme will be reviewed and updated to cover all the protected characteristics and targeted to meet the needs of different services.

The Council will review how it promotes knowledge and understanding of the general and specific duties among employees, including through performance assessment procedures to identify and address training needs.

Other Information

The Council is committed to advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between different people. It has done much work of this work initially through its gender, race and disability schemes, and more recently through its Equality and Diversity Scheme.

This has included the following:

- annual programmes of work with Show Racism the Red Card to promote awareness of race issues amongst children in schools and workshops;
- the annual schools calendar competition with Race Equality First;
- working with Remploy to provide job opportunities;
- improving access to the most used public buildings;
- equality training courses;
- a mentoring programme;
- regular women's development programmes;
- equality impact assessments of new and reviewed policies;
- annual Holocaust Memorial Day events;
- Housing Services working towards the Rainbow Award through the LGBT Excellence Centre.

The Council is committed to continuing with this work.

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

Appendix 1



**Strategic Equality Plan Engagement
November 2011**

Report by Consultation Policy Officer

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

Introduction

To inform the equality objectives of the Strategic Equality Plan a programme of public engagement has been undertaken. The programme was planned and conducted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council with the results to be shared with the Council's Local Service Board partners.

The primary aim of the engagement programme was to consult residents and service users who were representative of protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation) to ensure that the equality objectives, set in line with national research, addressed the equality issues that Vale residents felt to be most important.

The consultation sessions were also designed to capture information on what barriers to accessing services existed in the Vale; what initiatives residents felt were particularly valuable; and how implementation of the objectives should be measured.

Methodology

Equality officers from Vale of Glamorgan Council, Cardiff and the Vale UHB, Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board and South Wales Police combined their existing contacts with those of the Vale Council for Voluntary Services to compile a list of relevant voluntary and third sector organisations operating in the Vale of Glamorgan. From this list 67 organisations and support groups were invited to participate in the engagement programme and 30 organisations responded to this invitation.

Consultation sessions were held with the members of the following groups: Vale Dyspraxia Support Group, Carers UK - Vale of Glamorgan Branch, SCOPE, Older People's Strategy Forum Age Discrimination Group, Older People's Strategy Forum Executive Group, ABCD Cymru Information Sharing Group, Vale People First Young People's Group and Vale People First Leadership Team. Over one hundred Vale residents attended these sessions.

At the sessions, residents were asked what they felt to be the greatest barriers to accessing public services in the Vale, what initiatives or support services they felt were particularly useful and what further support or future initiatives they felt were needed.

In addition to these sessions, two focus groups were held. The focus groups were attended by equalities professionals. The following public, voluntary and third sector groups were represented at the focus groups: Age Concern, Advocacy Matters, Disability Sport Wales, Citizens Advice Bureau, BAWSO, Welsh Women's Aid, MIND Cymru, FACE, Alzheimer's Society, Wales Assembly of Women, MS Society, Cardiff and the Vale Coalition of Disabled People, Atal Y Fro, Public Health Wales, Cardiff Gypsy Traveller Project, and Transgender Wales.

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

At the focus groups delegates were asked to discuss barriers to accessing public services in the Vale and then asked to discuss the Council's draft equality objectives. The discussion around objectives focused on barriers that would need to be overcome, successful initiatives already operating in the Vale

All protected characteristics were represented during the engagement process.

Organisations that could not attend either of the focus groups were given the opportunity to respond in writing to this stage of the consultation.

Results

The most recurring comments made during the consultation sessions are given below. The most commonly recurring comments are given in bold.

Access to information:

- **All information must be made available in an accessible format. Too often information is not delivered in understandable language.** This is the case for age, ethnicity, disability – potential service users cannot understand a lot of the information that is publicly available. Accessing information on Housing services is particularly difficult.
- **A great deal of information is available on websites but this is not an appropriate format for many residents.**
- There are a number of voluntary groups and support services operating in the Vale and Cardiff, however, these are not well promoted. **There needs to be better signposting of information.**
- **Plain language is essential to improving access.** Vale People First and Mencap very good at translating info into accessible language.

Age:

- The views and opinions of both young and older people are often dismissed on the basis of age.
- Spending on older people is disproportionately low. Reasons for this should be made clear.

General:

- Many residents do not feel they can complain about incidences of discrimination in case they receive a lower quality of service in the future.

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

- Many individuals with protected characteristics often feel as though their **comments/complaints/opinions are dismissed by public bodies** – this is indirect discrimination.

Disability:

- For disabled residents physical access is still a major issue. Many buildings do not have effective ramps, working hearing loops, for example. It is almost impossible to get most private businesses involved. Access aids integration.
- Advocacy services are essential to including all sections of the community and involving residents from protected groups in decision making.

Throughout the engagement process the issues that were raised reflected the draft objectives. Where comments directly relate to the draft objectives, or were made during discussion of the objectives in the focus groups, these are given below.

Reduce repeat offences of domestic violence.

Both groups agreed that this should be a priority and that the wording of the objective is understandable.

'Repeat offences' suggests that some domestic violence is ignored. Objective should be re-worded to 'most serious offences' (or words to that effect).

Barriers to Overcome	Initiatives in the Vale	Measuring Success
Multi agency support is essential.	BAWSO offer refuge places and undertake home inspections to ensure homes are safe.	Increased numbers using services (either Police, Safer Vale or third sector, for example, Atal Y Fro). It can be assumed that levels of domestic violence are fairly steady but that reporting levels are low.
There are a great number of cultural issues surrounding domestic violence, particularly in Black and minority ethnic communities. As these are very sensitive issues, independent	Atal Y Fro services should be more widely promoted.	Increased levels of reporting to police would exclude a significant number of residents who would not feel confidence to go to them.

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

translators are essential. Informal translation (through children and neighbours, for example) are often used and this is totally inappropriate.		
More must be done to make victims aware of services.		
Public bodies should increase support to voluntary groups as these are much better placed to offer support than organisations such as the council, and police.		

Reduce harassment through awareness raising, education and use of hate crime helpline.

Or

Reduce disability harassment as above.

Both focus groups felt that, as it is not just disabled residents that are victims of harassment, the second version of the objective is not suitable. It was felt that the wording of the objective should perhaps refer to harassment of individuals with protected characteristics.

It was also felt that this outcome is too broad to be effective and also that there is a conflict within the objective. It was suggested that **raising awareness of services to address/prevent harassment should result in higher levels of reporting** and so this would appear to result in an increase in incidences of domestic violence.

It was suggested that “increased confidence to report harassment” or “work to improve reporting of who is being harassed by who” (or words to that effect) would be effective.

Barriers to Overcome	Initiatives in the Vale	Measuring Success
Raising awareness among general public	Safer Wales services are good but there is a	'Harassment' is a subjective term and so

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

will be very difficult. Where would training/ education take place?	lack of public confidence in police.	could be very difficult to measure.
There is a perception among members of the public that police will not do anything. There is no confidence in any of the public agencies that work to prevent harassment.		It would be impossible to quantify 'harassment' or 'confidence' to report.
Residents will not use the helpline if they do not have confidence in the agencies responsible for following calls up.		
More should be done to make Council and others aware of the impact of harassment on people's lives.		
Mediation services must be promoted.		
A lot of people do not recognise what 'harassment' actually is. This must be addressed.		

Review access to key services such as leisure, housing, residential care and education for older people, children and young people, **people with mental health conditions, Gypsy Travellers, transgender people, asylum seekers and refugees**, and sexual orientation.

And

Raise awareness of issues relating to older people, children and young people, **people with mental health conditions, Gypsy Travellers, transgender people, asylum seekers and refugees**, and sexual orientation.

When these objectives were presented it was the opinion of most respondents that the two are so closely linked that they cannot be separated. One cannot be undertaken without the other.

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

Barriers to Overcome	Initiatives in the Vale	Measuring Success
Collecting accurate data to measure access to services is essential. For this to be done data collection forms must be written sensitively – especially for mental health.	MINDful Employer* ensures employers have correct approach to mental health issues.	Robust data on who is using services would be a success.
Some communities, especially gypsies and travellers, are very reluctant to give monitoring information due to concerns they will receive a lower standard of service.	Rainbow Mark* ensures employers have the correct approach to sexual orientation issues.	Increased participation in community services from groups of residents with protected characteristics.
Many people will feel that they will be excluded from services if they disclose needs. This concern must be tackled before progress can be made.	*If initiatives such as these were made part of the Council procurement process then local companies would also raise standards.	
It must be made clear to service users exactly <i>why</i> we are gathering data.	Age Concern, Carers UK, ABCD Cymru all offer support for completing assessment forms/benefit claims. Highly valued by residents.	
Equalities training for staff should be mandatory.		
Some residents, particularly older people, feel there is stigma attached to applying for and accessing some support services.		

- Both focus groups were in agreement that any programme of raising awareness would have to be incremental and targeted rather than a blanket programme on 'equality issues'.

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

- **The level of knowledge and support for all disability issues across public service providers varies greatly.** This should be universal.
- **Raising awareness of individuals needs is essential.** Staff do not understand the issues affecting potential service users and so can be afraid of either putting clients at risk or offending them or others – this is never a serious risk.

Create accessible learning opportunities that help people of all ages develop skills and remove barriers to employment.

It was felt that the objective should make clear that this is not just for younger people as there is a perception that education services are focused on people of school age even though this is often not the case.

Barriers to Overcome	Initiatives in the Vale	Measuring Success
Cost of courses is the major barrier – particularly for older people.	Careers Wales offer a lot of support for younger people.	A greater number of individuals from groups with protected characteristics enrolled on courses.
Training opportunities for disabled people are often very outdated and so do not offer realistic prospect of employment.	Remploy placements.	
People who have not worked are not used to making decisions – this is not something that they can gain from courses currently on offer.	Shaw Trust	
There are a number of courses but there is not on point of contact for information on them. Job Centres etc. do not have an exhaustive list of everything on offer.	Vale Volunteer Bureau	
There is a lack of tailored support for people with disabilities		

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

that are seeking work.		
Language and literacy are major barriers. There are not adequate courses on offer to address this.		
Residents, especially those from Black and minority ethnic communities, do not feel that courses will lead to employment.		
Education/training providers must engage with potential service users to ensure correct courses are on offer.		

Improve the way we **monitor** who uses our services and how we **involve** people in shaping services that meet their needs.

Participants in all stages of the consultation felt that **gathering effective monitoring data is essential to identifying discrimination.**

Barriers to Overcome	Initiatives in the Vale	Measuring Success
With any increase in collecting monitoring data it must be clear from the outset why we are collected data and what it will be used for. Residents must feel they are being involved to help make decisions not just to tick a box.	Making anonymous monitored data publicly available could demonstrate inclusive approach of public bodies.	Accurate reporting that shows an increase in residents with protected characteristics becoming involved in consultation/engagement.
Concerns surrounding why data is being collected must be tackled – service users must have confidence in what monitoring information is being used for.		
The same process/categories		

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

must be used across all services.		
There is a perception that consultation is sometimes reactive. Instead there should be an ongoing dialogue with service users.		
There needs to be a definite set of principles for consultation/ engagement.		

- There must be a process in place to feedback objectives and results of SEP to residents. Voluntary organisations may be best placed to disseminate information.
- It must also be clear who is accountable for delivering the objectives.**

Raise awareness of general and specific duties, and extend equality training to cover all protected characteristics.

Barriers to Overcome	Initiatives in the Vale	Measuring Success
Training must be engaging and challenge individuals' perceptions to be effective.	SCOPE, BAWSO, MIND, Age Concern, Vibe Experience, Disability Wales and Menter Y Fro all run training courses.	
Equalities training should be part of corporate induction.		
Even if trained to recognise discrimination staff are unlikely to challenge colleagues.		

- Staff must be trained to better understand individuals' needs.** This is the only path to mutual awareness and respect.
- Both focus groups felt that, particularly for this objective, the Vale of Glamorgan Council should set the standard for the area and represent a model of good practice.

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan

Conclusion

The comments made by residents during the engagement suggest that the draft objectives are well focused and address issues that are of priority to residents in the Vale. The results of the consultation appear to confirm that the research data gathered nationally that has been used to draft the objectives mirrors the experience of Vale residents.

When writing the draft plan consideration will need to be given to amending the wording of some objectives in order to make them clear and easily understandable. In places, greater emphasis will be given to the issues most commonly raised by participants.

The draft Strategic Equality Plan will also need to make clear how the delivery of these objectives will be assessed and monitored and how this information will then be communicated to residents.