



**The Vale of Glamorgan Council's
Annual Equality Report
2023-2024**

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**This document is available in Welsh.
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg.**

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Introduction

We must report on progress towards meeting our equality objectives and other equality matters every year by 31 March for performance in the previous year. This report tells you about our equality work between April 2023 and March 2024.

We do this to meet our duties under:

- the Equality Act 2010;
- the Public Sector Equality Duty (known as the ‘general duty’); and
- the specific duties for Wales.

We tell you how we have collected and used information to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- advance equality of opportunity; and
- foster good relations.

We also tell you about:

- how we are getting on with our equality objectives
- the people we employ
- other equality work.

Background

We have described our main equality work in our [Strategic Equality Plan 2024-25](#).

We agreed this plan in March 2024. We engaged with key stakeholders to propose that we maintain the current equality objectives from the 2020-24 Plan. We have chosen to do this because we want to develop a new set of equality objectives alongside the development of our new corporate wellbeing objectives for 2025-2030.

It progresses our work from our previous plans in 2012 and 2016. There were a number of things we had to do to develop the first plan. We list the main steps below.

- We looked at the information we had on the people using our services. We especially wanted to know which protected groups were using our services.
- We met with local organisations to see if there were areas that we could work on together.
- We looked at other plans to see if they had actions that needed to be in the Strategic Equality Plan. These included the Corporate Plan and the Equality and Diversity Plan.
- We arranged events to meet with other organisations that have an interest in the needs of protected groups. We went to their meetings if they could not come to ours.
- We consulted with the public, staff, and trade unions.
- We talked to people about what our priorities should be.

This helped us to decide on our equality objectives. These are an important part of the Strategic Equality Plan.

We consulted people in 2019 for our 2020-2024 Plan and in 2023 for the 2024-2025 plan. We used feedback from engagement and consultation to develop a new set of equality objectives that give us a more balanced focus between internal and external outcomes. We developed these using more recent research such as [‘Is Wales Fairer? 2018’](#) by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. We made links with our corporate wellbeing objectives.

To make sure we achieve the equality objectives, we put actions in service plans. These plans guide the work of each service area (such as Housing or Visible Services). Each service must monitor progress with these actions and report on this.

We have a Cabinet member for Community Engagement, Equalities and Regulatory Services to lead on equality issues as well as an elected member Equalities Champion. Directors take the lead in their own service area.

We find out about the latest issues and guidance in a number of ways, including through the Equality and Human Rights Commission network.

Since we agreed the last Strategic Equality Plan in 2020, there have been many changes that have impacted upon people's lives including Covid, the cost-of-living crisis, and the Black Lives Matter movement. The Welsh Government has published several plans such as the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan for Wales, the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales, and Age Friendly Wales. There is some reflection of these priorities in this latest Strategic Equality Plan, and we will further consider our thinking around these in the coming year as we develop the next set of equality objectives.

Steps taken to identify and collect relevant information

We collect information about who uses our services. There is a corporate approach available for doing this so that our Services can collect data on protected groups in a consistent way. See the corporate equalities monitoring form in [Appendix 3](#). We encourage services to improve how they use this information to help them plan their work to better meet people's needs.

In this year's report, we report on the following services:

- Planning
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing
- Learning and Skills – Employability
- Strategy and Insight
- Vale 50+ Forum & Age Friendly Vale
- Housing – Supporting People
- Communities for Work
- Benefits
- Learning Links Team
- School Access
- Social Services – Adult Services
- Social Services – Children and Young People's Services
- Participation
- Communications
- Customer Service
- Youth Service

When we look at the information gathered, we consider:

- the data gathered over the last few years;
- the systems used to gather the data; and
- how Services use this information to make improvements.

This helps managers to identify gaps in the information and take appropriate action.

We asked services to complete an [online Microsoft Form](#) but some services also returned the Microsoft Word form, which can be seen in [Appendix 2](#).

We asked our services:

- What have you achieved in respect of equality objectives from the Strategic Equality Plan 2020–2024 that are relevant to your service?
- What other work have you done during this period that supports equality and meeting the three aims of the general duty?
- Do you have effective arrangements for collecting equalities information?
- Which protected characteristics do you monitor?
- Have you monitored socio-economic disadvantage?
- How have you used equalities monitoring and data analysis to make changes, improve services, and influence decisions that improve outcomes for protected groups?

You can find the equality information that Services have collected in [Appendix 4](#).

The form encourages services to show how they have used the information to make improvements to services.

Reasons for not collecting relevant information

Some of the reasons for not collecting information include:

- users not wanting to complete another form or provide additional information;

- concern that limited surveys do not reflect a true picture;
- not having systems to collect the information;
- inappropriate or difficult to collate the information;
- availability of data;
- lack of understanding of how collecting data would impact work;

We encourage managers to explain the importance of this information to service improvement.

Statement on the effectiveness of steps taken to fulfil each of our equality objectives

Here is a short outline of how we developed our original objectives. You can find full details of this in our first [Strategic Equality Plan](#).

- We used national research to help us understand the issues such as the '[How Fair is Wales? 2023](#)' report produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.
- We looked at whether we had any information in the Council to tell us more.
- We talked to groups who know about the interests of protected groups.
- We looked at the information we had on the people using our services. We especially wanted to know which protected groups were using our services.
- We consulted with our own staff and the public.
- We agreed the equality objectives that we would work on for the next four years.

We show what work we have done on these in this report.

Strategic Equality Objective One – Improve how we involve, engage, and communicate with protected groups about our work and decisions.

Strategic Equality Objective Two – Continue to reduce the gender pay gap in the Council, identify whether there is a pay gap for ethnic minorities in the Council by March 2022, and report on both annually.

Strategic Equality Objective Three – Improve employment opportunities in the Council for protected groups, particularly disabled and young people, to more closely reflect the diversity of the local population by March 2024.

Strategic Equality Objective Four – Continue to work on developing a more inclusive work environment that supports staff from all backgrounds to reach their potential through implementing a range of actions by March 2024.

Strategic Equality Objective Five – Provide support and development to elected members on equality issues.

Strategic Equality Objective Six – Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to address attainment gaps for children and young people and provide support to overcome barriers to them reaching their full potential.

Strategic Equality Objective Seven – Develop and implement processes throughout the life of this plan to address hate crimes, violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.

Strategic Equality Objective Eight – Consider the housing needs of people with protected characteristics and how our work impacts on them, taking action to address any disproportionate impacts on these groups.

Strategic Equality Objective Nine – Work in partnership to consider issues relating to transport accessibility, particularly for disabled people and older people.

Strategic Equality Objective Ten – Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to promote our natural and built environment and cultural heritage, including accessibility, to protected groups.

Summary of work carried out in line with Strategic Equality Objectives

Strategic Equality Objective 1

Improve how we involve, engage, and communicate with protected groups about our work and decisions.

Contact centre – ContactOneVale

There were 134,354 phone calls to the C1V call centre between April 2023 and March 2024. The average wait time was 342 seconds. C1V received around 35,000 emails.

Communications

In quarter 4, we saw 8,800 engagements on the Council’s corporate Facebook account and over 6,500 link clicks. The Council’s corporate X/Twitter content reaches over 2,000 users daily.

The corporate Facebook account has 25,000 followers. The Welsh language account has 144 followers. The corporate X/Twitter account has 22,400 followers whilst the Welsh language account has 653 followers.

Public Participation Strategy

The Public Participation Strategy outlines the Council’s current position on engagement and consultation, as well as setting out how we will be diverse in our engagement methods to provide as many stakeholders as possible the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process. We continue to explore new and innovative ways to connect with the public.

Consultations

We have engaged with residents of the Vale of Glamorgan throughout 2023-24 on consultations including:

- St Cyres Park Biodiversity Project
- 20mph Speed Limit Exceptions
- Safer Vale Partnership Strategy 2023-28

- Murchfield Recreation Ground
- Draft Digital Strategy 2023-28
- Sully Section 106 Funding
- Public Transport and Road Safety Survey 2023-24
- Let's Talk About Life in the Vale
- Annual Delivery Plan 2024-25
- Replacement Local Development Plan 2021-36
- Budget Consultation 2024-25
- Public Space Protection Orders
- Draft Tree Strategy
- Colcot and Buttrills Recreation Sites

This is how the Preferred Strategy for the Replacement Local Development Plan engaged with stakeholders and obtained participation:

- Utilised a new consultation platform from April 2023.
- Brought to the Equality Consultative Forum.
- Brought to the Vale 50+ Forum.
- In-person and online engagement sessions.
- Accepting representations in a variety of formats such as online consultation portal, on paper, letter, email, or in person.
- Easy-read versions of the document were available.
- Short video with subtitles available to explain the plan and process.
- Venues for in-events were in accessible locations.

Learning and Skills – Sustainable Communities for Learning

Three statutory consultations were undertaken during the 2023-2024 period in relation to schools: St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School, Stanwell School, and Ysgol Iolo Morgannwg.

The consultation process follows Welsh Government guidelines outlined in the School Organisation Code (2018). Before any decisions are made, we ensure that we offer opportunities for individuals and interested groups to make their views and opinions on the proposals known, to enable Cabinet to consider these views as part of the decision-making process.

To improve engagement with children, a consultation workshop was held with the individual school councils. The information obtained at the sessions was included in the final consultation report. Parents, carers, and guardians of pupils, as well as members of the local community were also invited to attend drop-in sessions.

Equality Consultative Forum

The Equality Consultative Forum (ECF) is made up of a number of external organisations that represent the interests of people with different protected characteristics and groups including Stonewall, Mind in the Vale, Vale People First, Citizens Advice Bureau, and the Vale 50+ Forum along with a range of officers and elected officials across the Council with a specific interest in a particular group such as the Youth Service, Age Friendly, Healthy Living Team, Social Services, and Human Resources.

The Equality Consultative Forum met five times in 2023-2024 to discuss a range of corporate plans and initiatives as well as some items from external partners. Colleagues from Planning attended. Items discussed included:

Equality Impact Assessments	Strategic Equality Plan
Replacement Local Development Plan	Annual Delivery Plan
Public Health report	Let's Talk About Life in the Vale

Vale 50+ Strategy Forum and Age Friendly Vale

We continue to support the Vale 50+ Strategy Forum who are a voice for older people in the Vale of Glamorgan. We supported the Forum to hold a series of in-person meetings for people aged 50+ to share their views on important topics as well as a suite of public Have Your Say events.

We worked with the Forum to engage and communicate with more residents through a range of communication methods to ensure there are both online and offline opportunities for older residents to access information and shape decisions. We have used feedback from events to help shape the Age Friendly Vale draft action plan.

The Age Friendly Vale Officer continues to progress the Age Friendly Vale action plan. They held events to continue to engage with older people and members of the Vale 50+ Forum, including the Age Friendly Autumn Workshop, Age Friendly Celebration in December 2023, and the Festive Get Together.

Data and Insight

The Strategy and Insight team encourage the use of data to support and shape Council policies and decisions. The team create and update the Economic Monthly Report, the Cost-of-Living Analysis, and Census 21 analysis which provide invaluable insight into communities in the Vale of Glamorgan, including those who may be deprived, experiences socio-economic pressures, and those with protected characteristics. The reports are shared with all Council departments who can use the data to better inform the decision-making process.

An example of the Cost-of-Living Analysis for May 2024 can be viewed [here](#).

The Monthly Economic Update report for July 2024 can be viewed [here](#).

Strategic Equality Objective 2

Continue to reduce the gender pay gap in the Council, identify whether there is a pay gap for ethnic minorities in the Council by March 2024, and report on both annually.

We monitor the gender pay gap on a quarterly basis. We report the median gender pay gap to the Welsh Government. We report on the gender pay gap quarterly through performance indicators and annually through this report.

The gender pay gap has decreased slightly from last year. The difference in mean hourly rate between male and female employees is £0.65, a decrease from £1.03 last year. The difference in median hourly rate between male and female employees is £0.59. The mean gender pay gap as a percentage of men's pay is 3.71% and the median gender pay gap as a percentage of men's pay is 3.81%, which is less than the UK median gender pay gap of 8.1%.

We also monitor the ethnicity pay gap on a regular basis, reporting as part of the Council's Quarterly Performance Indicators. The ethnicity pay gap has increased from last year. The difference in mean hourly rate is £0.98, an increase from £0.65 last year. The median ethnicity pay gap has increased from £0.37 to £1.03. The mean ethnicity pay gap as a percentage is 5.73% and the median ethnicity pay gap as a percentage is 6.7%, both of which increased from last year.

The last pay review in 2019 in relation to the revised NJC spine had a positive impact on the gender pay gap. We are undertaking work to review the current pay structure, and we will again consider both the gender and ethnicity pay gaps. When recruiting to roles, we consider where we advertise to ensure we are getting representation across all applicant groups. We continue to work on improving our diversity profile and using the diversity dashboards to address the ethnicity and gender pay gaps.

Strategic Equality Objective 3

Improve employment opportunities in the Council for protected groups, particularly disabled and young people, to more closely reflect the diversity of the local population by March 2024.

Communities for work

We collect user data for Communities for Work+ to share monthly with Welsh Government. This allows us to compare with the rest of Wales and target specific groups. This year, trends show a high level of white males so we have put in strategies to engage more females: we developed lone parent work in Penarth and focused training on parents of primary school children, such as a classroom assistant course where the work fits with parental commitments.

We continue to work on different projects that respond to specific groups where evidence has shown employment is harder to access. These include:

- Quickstart, which gives young people aged 18 to 25 a six-month paid work placement. Twelve young people currently have placements with the Council.

- Strive, which is a pre-sixteen school-based project to help develop motivation and personal skills, removing engagement barriers.
- Supported employment aimed at 18-30 year olds with disabilities and/or neurodiverse conditions.
- Engaging economically inactive individuals in the rural Vale into employment or activities such as volunteering or training.
- Working with partner organisations for supported volunteering opportunities.

We continue to work with the Vale's Working Wales/Careers Wales (WW/CW) team and the Youth Service, following a successful Young Person's Event in February 2023. Welsh Government figures showed that the Vale of Glamorgan was the top performing Local Authority in engagement of 16-24 year olds. We also worked with JobCentre Plus to host Youth Job Clubs as well as successful 25+ Job Clubs.

We held a construction employment event in November 2023. We are working with contractors to deliver a series of construction themed events targeted at job seekers throughout 2024.

Social Services – Adult Services

Members of Vale People First are on the interview panel for all social care staff and manager appointments within the Learning Disability teams. They are also key partners in monitoring the Supported Living Contract.

All appointments for Mental Health and Substance Misuse include with a person with lived experience on the interview panel. All social workers within the Vale Locality Mental Health Team received co-production training developed with Cardiff and Vale Action on Mental Health, delivered by a person with lived experience. Following this training, we developed a good practice tool kit.

Human Resources

We introduced a new employee record system, Fusion, in April 2023. This is a self-service portal that allows staff to update their own personal details. We ran a communication campaign to encourage staff to update their details. We have reported a

7.3% increase in recorded information. As such, we can more accurately report on our workforce in terms of protected characteristics and can identify new trends and groups on which to focus recruitment.

Human Resources launched an overseas recruitment project in 2023 to address caring vacancies. We have worked with communities to support new recruits. The project is reflected in the employment statistics shown in [Appendix 5](#).

Strategic Equality Objective 4

Continue to work on developing a more inclusive work environment that supports staff from all backgrounds to reach their potential through implementing a range of actions by March 2024.

We encourage all staff to set aside time for personal development and take part in programs such as Infuse and reverse mentoring. The Learning Café network relaunched in October 2023. It aims to bring staff together from across the authority to share ideas and resources, promoting collaboration on themes such as ‘community power’ and ‘transformation’.

We have supported the emerging staff disability network, Abl. We continue to look for colleagues with lived experience to lead and progress the network. Equalities staff have represented Abl at Human Resources meetings and the Joint Consultative Forum.

Abl joins our other established staff networks in the Vale of Glamorgan Council: GLAM and Diverse. GLAM is our staff network for LGBTQ+ colleagues and allies, and Diverse is our staff network for global majority colleagues and allies. More information about the networks’ activities through this period can be found [later in the report](#).

The networks provide support and information to members, share knowledge and experiences, feedback on Council policies, and help inform training. The networks are important in showing how the Council delivers its corporate values and culture as an inclusive employer. We work with the networks to achieve various accreditations. We

display and promote these on our external recruitment pages. We added links to the accreditations and networks on the website banner.



We continue our work as a Stonewall Diversity Champion using the Stonewall Workforce Equality Index to guide our work. We monitor and evaluate improvements towards further inclusion of our LGBTQ+ workforce. We took part in the Stonewall Workplace Equalities Index. We were awarded a silver award in 2023, ranking 126 out of 400, with a score of 60.5 out of 200.

We post articles on Staffnet to mark various awareness days and events. Sharing information about these awareness days and events means we can raise awareness of different groups and minorities, contributing to a more inclusive work environment. In addition, we ensure relevant equalities-related content on iDev is current and promoting the right message.

For National Inclusion Week 2023, we held an online event where representatives from GLAM, Diverse, Abl, and the Wellbeing Champions discussed their networks and answered questions from staff. The event was hosted by the Director for Corporate Resources.

The Learning Café relaunched in October 2023 for staff across the Council and schools. It includes eight topic groups which aim to drive personal and professional growth, and promote meaningful discussions and collaboration across the authority. By December 2023, there were over 80 members.

Strategic Equality Objective 5

Provide support and development to elected members on equality issues.

Members have access to iDev which hosts a range of e-learning modules on equality issues. They can access previous sessions and presentations via MemberNet. We provided information during the year specifically in relation to race awareness.

We keep Members' training and development under review and arrange to meet identified needs. The presentations, links, and resources from all training are available to members at any time via Membernet.

The Strategy and Insight team provide data and analysis to elected members including on equalities issues and protected characteristics.

The Annual Equality Monitoring Report is taken to scrutiny committees each year.

Strategic Equality Objective 6

Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to address attainment gaps for children and young people and provide support to overcome barriers to them reaching their full potential.

School attendance remains a concern. We offer targeted support to schools where persistent absence is a problem. The Council undertook a widespread communications campaign to encourage school attendance. Banners were shared with schools across the county.

Learning and Skills – Sustainable Communities for Learning

Three statutory consultations were undertaken during 2023-24 in relation to schools: St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School, Stanwell School, and Ysgol Iolo Morgannwg.

The proposals for St Richard Gwyn and Ysgol Iolo Morgannwg aimed to address attainment gaps for children and young people by providing improved educational

facilities. The proposal for Stanwell School was to change it from a foundation school to a community-maintained school.

The Equality Impact Assessment found that there was a positive or neutral impact for Age and Disability in all three proposals and overall concluded the following for the three consultations.

Social Services – Children and Young People’s Service (CYPS)

We continue to monitor and update the information about protected characteristics that we hold on our WCCIS (Welsh Community Care Information System) database. This has improved how we evidence service development and delivery around protected characteristics.

CYPS facilitate a range of different teams and services who provide a range of services to support and help families, children, and young people. CYPS ensure that literature is provided bilingually and make use of the WITS translation service to liaise with families who speak other languages, providing interpreters when required.

The Family Information Service (FIS) achieved the Families First Quality Award recognising the good work done advice and assistance given to families.

Health and Safety and Wellbeing

We provide statistics on behaviour escalations. This is a relatively new metric which allows schools to review and support pupils who are having difficulties. We also provide an additional metric on violence and aggression in the workplace which includes hate crimes towards staff. With both metrics, we consider whether someone’s protected characteristics are a factor

Learning Links Team (formerly Vulnerable Groups Team)

The Vulnerable Groups team was renamed the Learning Links Team after discussions with children and young people.

To help schools improve attendance and minimise exclusions, we have offered training and support. We have also established School Attendance Officer Forums and a drop-in service for schools to discuss issues with the team.

We continue to work with schools to improve the identification and recording of bullying incidents and one-off incidents of prejudice within the My Concern database.

We delivered a range of programmes and interventions to support vulnerable learners to make positive progress. We hold regular clinics in schools with the Children and Young People's Service to triage and signpost children in need of care and support.

We have a virtual school report in place to monitor and track attendance of children including children who are looked after and previously looked after who are at risk of underachieving; service children; young carers; and children from the global majority. There are currently 342 children of service families in schools in the Vale of Glamorgan.

We worked with Young Carers to capture their views in relation to their education.

We worked closely with schools to ensure children from the global majority are effectively supported with their education. No global majority children or children where English is an additional language left compulsory education, training, or work-based learning without an approved external qualification.

We hold monthly meetings about school places with departments who support asylum-seeking families. The Adult Community Learning Team maximised grant funding to deliver ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) courses to local primary schools, enrolling over fifteen learners.

We work with Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) to ensure Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking children (UASC) have access to education provision wherever they are placed. To date, twelve UASC have successfully settled into schools and colleges in the Vale of Glamorgan. We also work with CASCADE Public Involvement Team to see how we can meet the needs of young unaccompanied asylum-seekers and help to provide advice and guidance to enable them to make choices about their futures.

We helped schools and learners to launch junior Diverse groups – groups for children and young people from the global majority and their allies. Our first groups were formed in Holton Primary School and St Cyres Secondary School. We supported both schools in junior safe space meetings with members of the Council’s strategic leadership team, where the children and young people openly asked questions of the Council’s senior officers. We facilitated an arts project at Holton School to celebrate Windrush Day in 2023. Senior officers and councillors were invited to the school to view the work.

A number of schools took part in an Anti-Racist Learning programme. Our first cohort of anti-racist schools presented their Action Research in June 2023. The second cohort presented their Action Research in July 2024.

We launched the Young Interpreters Scheme in nineteen schools, delivering training to the schools on using the resource to raise the wellbeing and self-esteem of multi-lingual learners. We facilitated the Giglets language and literacy resource in 37 schools to enable multi-lingual learners to access texts and resources in their own language.

These projects have helped schools as we support them to become Schools of Sanctuary. We are also active participants in supporting the council to become a County of Sanctuary.

Youth Service

We have focused on participation to ensure young people’s voices are heard. One example of this is in Penarth where Penarth Youth Action members developed a litter survey and now regularly update town councillors of their work.

The Rights Ambassadors project now has over twenty members. The group has delivered workshops to over three hundred children and young people across the Vale. Members also developed a board game based on children’s rights which will be delivered to secondary schools and community groups.

We supported the Her Voice Wales group with their #wedontfeelsafecampaign, which aimed to raise awareness of sexual harassment. The group was awarded the Youth Excellence Award for Demonstrating Excellence in partnership planning and delivery.

We have actively supported pupil voice initiatives such as a School Council Network meeting which took place in March 2024. Three secondary schools took part and discussed the social, mental health, and wellbeing strategy for the Vale of Glamorgan. The Youth Council has continued to meet monthly, welcoming new members after the Youth Parliament election. Members have also attended Learning and Culture scrutiny meetings to participate in discussions around school budgets and education.

We continue to support youth work initiatives that support young people with protected characteristics. The I AM ME group provides a safe space for socialisation and support for LGBTQ+ young people. The inclusive youth club HWB ran well in its pilot phase, with support for young people with additional needs to attend. We continue to encourage more learners with additional learning needs to participate in our open access provisions.

We worked with the Ethnic Minority Youth Support Team on their community mapping exercise find out about youth provision and support needs for young people from the global majority. This will result in a report with findings to inform future work.

Transgender Toolkit for Schools

Following consultation, the Transgender Toolkit and Guidance for schools was finalised and approved by Cabinet. It has been rolled out to schools and governors. The toolkit forms part of the suite of guidance documentation that we provide to schools on a range of issues including bullying, safeguarding, and protected characteristics.

School meals

From April 2023 we offered Free School Meals offer to all primary school children. This date was in advance of Welsh Government ambitions. It ensures as many as children as possible enjoy a healthy free meal in school as well as contributing towards cost-of-living support.

During the 2023 summer holidays, families of children eligible for Free School Meals received £50 from the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The Council committed more than £220,000 to ensure eligible families received the payment.

Pupil Development Grants

Schools continue to encourage qualifying parents to apply for School Essential Grants (previously known as Pupil Development Grants). A total of 3,228 applications were made between July 2023 and June 2024. This included 50 applications from Children Looked After. A total of £434,875 was awarded. From September 2023, the awards reverted to £200 for children in Year 7 and £125 for children in all other year groups.

Opportunities

Cadoxton Primary School reached the final 3 of the World's Best School Prize 2023 in the Overcoming Adversity category. With funding from the Welsh government, the school has assisted over 60 other schools across South Wales in setting up their own pay-as-you-feel Big Bocs Bwyd shops to help families in the cost-of-living crisis.

Ysgol y Deri

A new specialist school, Derw Newydd, opened in 2023. It replaced the previous pupil referral units, Y Daith, at Cowbridge and Amelia Trust. Derw Newydd offers bespoke provision for pupils that require support for complex social, emotional, and mental health needs. Cllr Rhianon Birch, Vale of Glamorgan Council Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language, said:

“This is an ultra-modern school building that will provide some of our most vulnerable pupils with effective support and excellent educational opportunities in a fantastic setting.”

A second site for Ysgol y Deri was opened in Barry in September 2023. The building formerly used by Ysgol Sant Baruc was renovated and retrofitted to provide a temporary base whilst a purpose-built building is developed in Lavernock, Penarth.

Strategic Equality Objective 7

Develop and implement processes throughout the life of this plan to address hate crimes, violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.

Safer Vale Partnership Strategy 2023-28

We launched the new [Safer Vale Partnership Strategy](#) for 2023-2028. The Safer Vale Partnership is made up of representation from the Vale of Glamorgan Council, South Wales Police, South Wales Fire and Rescue, National Probation Service, and Cardiff and the Vale University Health Board. The strategy has changed from a three-year plan to a five-year plan, which reflects the scale of the anticipated changes in the field of community safety over the coming years.

Community Safety

The Community Safety team continues to work closely with the police and other key partners to prevent hate crime, as well as deliver a broad range of actions to tackle violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.

We have worked with Safer Wales and several specialist services to signpost victims who may require different support. These services include Bawso, the Dyn Project, New Pathways, Rainbow Bridge, and Live Fear Free. We also worked with the Vale Domestic Abuse Service (Vale DAS) who remain the specialist support provider in the Vale of Glamorgan.

We launched the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) strategy, updated for 2023-2028. The updated strategy includes new commitments around strangulation and children as victims in their own right, as well as new policies for street and workplace harassment.

We facilitated twice weekly multi-agency meetings which improved outcomes for victims of high-risk domestic abuse. There were around twelve cases reported each month. Approximately 3% of cases were LGBT+ victims and 5% were black or global majority. On average, 7% of cases were diverted away from the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) process. Of cases reviewed in MARAC process, most victims were female.

We continued to actively promote Clare's Law as a vital tool to support the safety of women who think they might be at risk of being in a relationship with a perpetrator of domestic abuse. There were on average eleven Clare's Law applications each month.

We processed standard and medium Public Protection Notices (PPNs) where the victim has given consent for their data to be shared. In the first half of the year, we had over 200 cases. Most victims were female, and most perpetrators were repeat offenders. Over 500 referrals were made by the Domestic Abuse Assessment and Referral Coordinator (DAARC). Domestic abuse victims reported feeling safer because of security improvements to their homes delivered by the Safer Vale Partnership.

We see around twelve hate incidents every month. The most common incidents are due to race, sexual orientation, and transgender issues. We work with South Wales Police to actively promote the reporting of hate crime. As such, increases in the number of reported incidents are not necessarily indications of actual increases in hate crime.

We run the Community Cohesion Group, with staff reaching out to communities that are currently under-represented. A dedicated Community Cohesion officer supports progress on the actions in the community cohesion plan and helps to promote community initiatives and national days via our social media platforms.

The Community Safety team has a remit to tackle anti-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour in specific areas like derelict buildings in Barry town centre and youth nuisance at parks prompted the Community Safety team to take more preventative measures. We secured funding for more engagement work with young people.

We work with South Wales Police in relation to anti-social behaviour along the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff coastline under Operation Elstree. This multi-agency approach aims to keep coastal areas safe and family friendly.

Supporting People

We have piloted a new service for male domestic abuse victims. We commissioned a refuge service for male victims and transgender victims of domestic abuse.

Health and Safety and Wellbeing

We included an additional metric on violence and aggression in the workplace. The violence and aggression statistics and behaviour escalation statistics for schools include monitoring whether people's protected characteristics are a factor.

Her Voice Wales

Her Voice Wales is a group of girls aged 13-17 from the Vale of Glamorgan who started the #wedontfeelsafecampaign to raise awareness of catcalling and sexual harassment. Working with the Youth Service, the group conducted research and presented in the Council Chamber to the Leader, cabinet members, representatives from the police, and Senedd member Jane Hutt. Her Voice Wales worked with Community Safety to join the Vale of Glamorgan Council to the Safe Places National Network. This provides local venues and businesses with stickers to indicate a safe place to escape catcalling or sexual harassment. Her Voice Wales won a national prize with at the Youth Work Excellence Awards.

Strategic Equality Objective 8

Consider the housing needs of people with protected characteristics and how our work impacts on them, taking action to address any disproportionate impacts on these groups.

Strategy and Partnership - Vale 50+ Forum and Age Friendly Vale

The Vale 50+ Forum launched a housing topic group. The leads of the housing group met with the Housing department to discuss the draft Older People's Housing Strategy.

Housing is one of the eight domains recognised by the World Health Organisation as a feature of age friendly communities. Working towards a more age friendly Vale of Glamorgan is a commitment within the Public Services Board's Age Friendly Vale Charter and will feature within the emerging Age Friendly Vale draft action plan.

Adult Services – Social Services

We opened a third 'smart house'. This helps people with learning disabilities access high-quality modern accommodation that uses technology to promote independence.

We completed the refurbishment of the four Vale residential homes. The homes are now dementia friendly, reflecting population need and improving outcomes for residents.

Housing

We completed the actions due within the Older Persons Housing Strategy. We secured funding for the Penarth Extra Care scheme which will provide much needed specialist accommodation for older people in the eastern Vale. We are also progressing other new housing developments for older people across the Vale.

We opened an Action for Children residential home in October 2023.

By Quarter 4, there was an increase from 4.97% to 5.05% in the number of global majority groups on the social housing register.

Housing Solutions

We continue to review the allocation process for households with accessible housing needs to ensure that disabled applicants are considered for a greater number of homes.

We have also reviewed the Homes4U scheme and organised engagement events with Welsh Government and service users to ensure social housing is allocated proportionately, alleviating the pressures on temporary accommodation.

Homelessness prevention continues to be a priority. We appointed a Rapid Rehousing Officer this year to progress actions within the Council's Rapid Rehousing Policy.

Telecare

Vale Telecare and TEC Cymru were nominated at the International Technology Enabled Care Conference 2024. The nomination acknowledges their work in revolutionising telecare management in Wales and highlights our dedication to considering new technologies for improved service delivery.

Refugees

We developed around 90 units of temporary accommodation in Llantwit Major to provide high-quality short-term housing for Ukrainian refugees. We are committed to the Welsh Government's declaration that Wales is a 'Nation of Sanctuary' and continue to make a significant effort to helping those in need.

The Vale Resettlement team continue to assist refugees to resettle into the Vale of Glamorgan. The Council has a strong track record of assisting people from other parts of the world including those fleeing wars in Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine. The team works closely with other Council teams to provide integration into new lives in the Vale.

Supporting people

The Supporting People programme is responsible for engaging vulnerable clients and supporting them to maintain their tenancies. Services are open to everyone, and referrals are based on individual need. Over 3000 people received support this year.

Gypsy and Traveller accommodation

We continue to consider the assessment of current and future need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the Vale of Glamorgan within the Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) period to 2036.

We are still attempting to identify additional pitch spaces as specified in the Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA).

Benefits

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction help many people across the Vale of Glamorgan with their housing costs. It is key to the Council's work with regards to socio-economic disadvantage and cost of living.

There has been a decrease in the working-age Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction caseload. This reduction reflects more working-age people moving onto Universal Credit. We continue to monitor and consider targeted work to ensure that pensioners continue to apply for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction.

We work with the Homelessness team to ensure vulnerable tenants are identified so we can do what we can to ensure rent is paid, such as considering Discretionary Housing Payments.

Strategic Equality Objective 9

Work in partnership to consider issues relating to transport accessibility, particularly for disabled people and older people.

Strategy and Partnership - Vale 50+ Forum and Age Friendly Vale

Transport continues to be a key concern for many older people and a focus for the Vale 50+ Forum. The Vale 50+ Forum's transport topic group continues to have a strong relationship with the Vale of Glamorgan Council transport team and other local providers. In addition, transport is one of the eight domains recognised by the World Health Organisation as a feature of age friendly communities. Access to suitable forms of transport is a commitment within the Public Service Board's Age Friendly Vale Charter as well as a feature of the emerging Age Friendly Vale draft action plan.

Greenlinks

We continue to recruit volunteers and offer a training course on accessibility. We are considering refresher courses for our drivers to ensure users are safe and comfortable.

Active Travel

We use Active Travel funding from Welsh Government to help residents make active travel options every day to be healthy and connected to communities. We also use Section 106 financial contributions to improve active travel and transport services in localised areas.

We completed pedestrian and cycle improvements in Eglwys Brewis and Rhoose as well as several pedestrian improvements on routes across the Vale. We also made active travel improvements in Wenvoe.

We worked with Fairfield Primary School in Penarth and Sustrans to launch the Vale's first school street closure as part of the 'School Street' initiative to provide a traffic-free, safe environment for pupils to get to school.

Public Transport

We contribute to the national scheme to provide concessionary bus passes for people aged 60 and over, and people who have certain disabilities. Around 72% of Vale of Glamorgan residents aged 60 and over possessed a valid concessionary bus pass.

We also actively promote the My Travel Pass scheme which provides discounted travel for young people aged 16 to 21 years old, and the Orange Wallet scheme for people with autism.

We continue to use Welsh Government grants to enable upgrades to bus stops and shelters, including accessibility improvements. We used Welsh Government grants and Section 106 funds to provide electronic bus stop information displays which will be converted to 'real time' displays with the wider Transport for Wales roll-out.

Other developments

We encouraged more sustainable transport options through the Cycle to Work scheme and electric vehicle charging points.

The Active Travel team worked in partnership with Vale Homes and Pedal Power to welcome the Barry Bike Club back to Barry. The scheme provided weekly free of charge cycling sessions for children aged between six and ten during the summer.

Strategic Equality Objective 10

Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to promote our natural and built environment and cultural heritage, including accessibility, to protected groups.

Central to this objective is one of the Public Services Board's 2023-28 Well-being Objectives: a more resilient and greener Vale, a more active and healthier Vale, a more equitable and connected Vale.

Strategy and Partnership - Vale 50+ Forum and Age Friendly Vale

The Vale 50+ Forum established a new climate change topic group. Accessible outdoor spaces is one of the eight domains recognised by the World Health Organisation as a feature of age friendly communities. Working towards a more age friendly Vale of Glamorgan where people have access to safe outdoor spaces and buildings with suitable facilities is a commitment within the Public Services Board's Age Friendly Vale Charter. This features within the emerging Age Friendly Vale draft action plan.

Regeneration

The Council signed the Design Commission for Wales placemaking charter. More information can be found [here](#). All decisions relating to development and projects should follow the six principles of the charter: People and Community; Movement; Public Realm; Location; Mix of Uses; and Identity.

Place Making

We signed the Placemaking Wales Charter and now receive funding from Welsh Government to bolster how the Council works with local communities to identify development opportunities. The Regeneration team is responsible for the leading on the placemaking plans, to be complete by March 2026.

We developed placemaking plans for the four Vale town centres with a focus on identifying key priorities to improve their unique physical, cultural, and social identities to enable them to thrive for the long term. Work has commenced in all four towns.

Tourism

The Tourism and Events team support a wide calendar of events throughout the year. While some are supported financially, others are supported with advice, equipment, and marketing. During 2023-24, we provided financial support to over twenty events and additional non-financial support to over thirty events.

Play Streets

Play Streets pilots took place in two residential streets in Barry, led by residents with support from the Vale Play Team and Play Wales. This involved closing the road for two hours a month during which children and residents could safely engage in outdoor play and socialisation. Some new projects have grown following the pilot including a gardening club.

The intended outcome of this scheme is for more children to enjoy the health, social, cognitive, and emotional benefits that outdoor play provides. This aligns with the Council's goal of creating a healthy Vale and a healthy Wales.

Other matters relevant to the general duty and specific duties

You will see in [Appendix 4](#) which services have collected data and promoted equality.

In addition, we report below on other matters that help us to promote equality and showcase the equality work across the Council.

Socio-Economic Duty

We continued the Warm Welcome / Croeso Cynnes scheme in 2023-24. This is a network of community spaces that offer a warm and inviting place for people to come together over the winter months. The cost-of-living webpage supports residents on a range of topics related to the cost-of-living crisis. Between June 2023 and February 2024, it received over 32,800 views.

Funding from the Council's cost of living grant was awarded to over thirty community support organisations, including schools, in 2023-24. This enabled local projects to support residents with the challenges associated with the cost-of-living crisis.

Equality Impact Assessments

We assess the impact of our work on protected groups.

We continue to support managers to think about their work in this way.

We think about how changes might affect people with protected characteristics and how we can minimise adverse impacts on them.

We consider the impact of our work on the Welsh language in the assessment process, in line with Welsh Language Standards.

We have considered the Audit Wales report '[Equality Impact Assessments: More than a Tick Box Exercise](#)'. We started a review of our process, taking the recommendations into account.

Equality Training

We offer e-learning modules on a range of equality topics including equality and diversity; discrimination; the Equality Act; how to assess the impact of our work on protected groups (equality impact assessments); disability awareness; and LGBTQ+ and trans issues.

Staff can access e-learning modules from Council provided computers and personal devices. This can make it easier for some people to do the training. We can also monitor who has completed the training.

We raise awareness of equality issues throughout the year with articles on Staffnet and information in the Chief Executive's weekly newsletter.

Libraries and Arts

The Adult Community Learning Team trained four new volunteers who deliver the weekly Digital Drop-In sessions at Palmerston Centre.

We launched a monthly group for visually impaired people at Penarth Library.

The Arts Development Service worked with Social Services to offer young people opportunities to engage in arts workshops delivered by specialised professionals. These activities challenged literacy, creative thinking, and skill building whilst addressing physical and mental health and wellbeing.

We provide a range of events at Penarth Pier Pavilion and the Kymin in Penarth. We introduced a half-term children's disco and Easter holiday cinema programme aimed at families. Feedback shows that over 80% of people attending one of these events felt the ticket price was good value for money, important in the current financial situation.

Procurement

We are now part of Ardal, the collaborative procurement partnership that comprises of four local authorities: Cardiff, Monmouthshire, Torfaen, and the Vale of Glamorgan. Together the four authorities have a combined annual spend of over £1 billion, and the

aim of the partnership is to deliver socially responsible procurement for all partners through shared resources, knowledge, and expertise.

The procurement service is structured around specialist category support. The Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) for Ardal include objectives around equalities, fairness, and protected characteristics such as:

- Initiatives to reduce the gender pay gap for staff employed in relation to the contract.
- Innovative measures relating to “a more equal Wales” to be delivered on the contract.
- Initiatives to support older, disabled, and vulnerable people to build stronger community networks.
- Initiatives to support the Dementia Friendly pledge.
- Initiatives to support people with learning disabilities and mental health issues to be more independent.

We have published a new Procurement Policy and Strategy for 2023-2027. The aim is that all procurement decisions are made through the lens of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The policy includes a framework for minimum, expected, and preferred standards for specific areas in sustainable and ethical procurement. These standards are reflected in the Council’s procurement processes and documentation.

Disability Confident Scheme

We are proud to be a member of this scheme. It recognises employers who help disabled candidates into work and support employees if they suffer ill health during their working lives. We re-registered for Level 2 in January 2024 as a Disability Confident Employer.

Under the scheme, we help people with disabilities in several ways:

- **Accessible interviews**

We remove barriers to interviews by providing things like car parking; signers; Braille; wheelchair access; a loop system; or interpreter.

- **Prior Consideration**

We guarantee an interview to people with disabilities so long as they meet the essential requirements of the person specification for the post.

- **Interview location**

We can arrange for a visit to the interview location before the interview. We can then make adjustments or adaptations before the interview if needed.

- **Developing abilities**

We make sure there is an opportunity for people to develop and use their abilities. We do this through our appraisal system, #itsaboutme.

- **Supporting employees**

We support staff to stay in employment if they become disabled. We provide an occupational health service and a counselling service.

- **Raising awareness**

We arrange training to help staff know more about disability. We also advertise our commitment on Staffnet and on posters in the building.

For more information, visit the [Disability Confident website](#).

LGBTQ+ Work

We developed an action plan to improve the workplace for LGBTQ+ people. This helps us ensure we treat people fairly when they are employees or applying for jobs.

Our work includes supporting the LGBTQ+ and allies' network, GLAM. We also have LGBTQ+ Champions at both Member and senior management level.

We continue to be a member of Stonewall's Diversity Champions Programme. We take part in Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index (WEI). The WEI provides a framework to

improve lesbian, gay, bi, and trans inclusion in the workplace and provides us with a benchmark to gauge our improvement. We work with GLAM to make positive changes, taking into account feedback from Stonewall and other sources. This helps us to improve inclusivity for people, whatever their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Council has continued to improve its standing in the Workplace Equalities Index. The Vale of Glamorgan Council was awarded a silver award for 2023/24 and ranked 91 out of 246 organisations. It is a significant achievement to make it into the top 100.



For more information, visit the [Stonewall Diversity Champions website](#).

Race Work

Trailblazer

In August 2022, the Vale of Glamorgan Council was awarded Race Equality Matters Trailblazer status in recognition of its work to address racial inequality across the organisation, addressing racial inequality and becoming a more diverse, inclusive, and equal organisation.

We were told that the Council’s work to ensure that global majority voices are heard in Safe Space meetings was “clear and substantial” and we received the highest score possible for making sure that improvement suggestions were implemented.

Only 64% of applicants achieved Trailblazer status which demonstrates how seriously the judges took this decision as well as the level of achievement we attained.



Safe Space

We use a number of the solutions offered by Race Equality Matters, including Safe Space Plus. This is a facilitated dialogue between senior leadership and ethnically diverse colleagues intended to inform, educate, and understand the issues from the perspective of those with lived experiences and take action to make improvements.

We hold Safe Space meetings from time to time and monitor progress through action plans.

Safe Space meetings were held with the Diverse groups of two Vale schools in March 2024, one primary and one secondary. Members of the Strategic Leadership Team met with children at their schools to answer questions.



Race Equality Week

We marked Race Equality Week by promoting Race Equality Matters' Day Challenge. This encouraged staff across the Council to complete short daily reflective exercises and challenges, watching videos to explore different themes including microaggressions and being anti-racist.

We shared information in the daily articles about the Diverse network, Trailblazer status, Safe Space, and promoted the #MyNamels solution.

Day five of Race Equality Week calls for staff to make a Big Promise to show commitment to race equality. Senior leaders took part, and we shared the Big Promise of three members of the Strategic Leadership Team.

Over 99% of Vale of Glamorgan Council staff received the articles and daily challenges by email. The articles were shared on Staffnet+, with over 1000 views.



Windrush Day

We marked Windrush Day 2023 by raising the Windrush flag outside the Civic Offices. and supporting Holton Primary School's Windrush art project.

We invited members of the community to share their stories and experiences. We will build on this idea in the future.

National Inclusion Week

We celebrated National Inclusion Week in 2023. We shared an article each day with a different inclusion focus. We also held a panel event on Teams with representatives from the staff networks: GLAM, Diverse, Abl, and the wellbeing champions. The event was hosted by the Director for Corporate Resources and provided an opportunity for staff to find out about the networks and the work they do.

Staff Networks

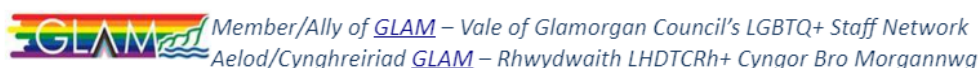
Our staff networks work collaboratively across the Council as well as providing support to colleagues. They contribute to our Stonewall Workplace Equality Index submission, Trailblazer application, and Disability Confident scheme amongst other programmes.

GLAM



GLAM is the Council's LGBTQ+ staff network, welcoming LGBTQ+ staff and allies from across the council. GLAM supported management training sessions and produced information packs and articles on awareness days. GLAM presented information for Strategic Leadership Team meetings and Joint Consultative Forum meetings.

New co-chairs were appointed in 2023 who prepared the group for attendance at Barry Pride, Cowbridge Pride and Pride Cymru in Cardiff. GLAM produced new Pride-themed corporate Teams backgrounds and introduced email signatures for GLAM members.



GLAM chairs led on a project to display the staff network logos on the external website footer which link to information about working for the Council as an inclusive employer.



GLAM members at Barry Island for Barry Pride:



GLAM members in Cardiff for Pride Cymru:



GLAM members and local politicians in Cowbridge for Cowbridge Pride:



Diverse



The Diverse staff network aims to raise awareness, provide a social and supportive environment, and have a positive impact for colleagues from the global majority. All Council employees and members are welcome to join.

Diverse works across the Council to promote race equality and improve employment and service delivery for global majority colleagues and communities. Diverse supports mandatory race awareness and unconscious bias training for staff along with anti-racism workshops in schools. Diverse presented information to Strategic Leadership Team meetings and Joint Consultative Forum meetings.

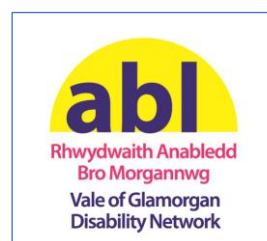
Diverse held monthly meetings where members discussed policies and personal stories. Meetings are publicised through emails and on Staffnet. Another member profile was shared during the period, with more planned for 2024/25.

Diverse worked with children from Holton Primary School on an arts project to mark Windrush 2023. Diverse also held a joint meeting with the junior diversity group at the school.

Diverse members have played a significant role in the Safe Space meetings and achieving the Bronze Trailblazer accolade from Race Equality Matters.

Abl

We continued to progress the staff disability network.



We had a meeting in August 2023 to discuss the proposed terms of reference. We sent an email and Staffnet piece in November 2023 to raise awareness of the network, which generated a lot of interest from staff across the Council.

We named our staff disability network Abl. We produced a Staffnet page which includes information and a resource bank for staff, managers, and allies. We created terms of reference and continue to our quest for a leadership team with lived experience.

Abl has a Strategic Leadership Team champion and an elected member champion.

Menopause Awareness

The Council recognises that a large and increasing proportion of its workers will be working through and beyond the menopause. As an organisation we are committed to supporting all our staff affected by the menopause. We delivered menopause awareness sessions and are looking at ways to develop online learning that all staff can access.

The Occupational Health team delivered another Menopause Café in 2023-24 to help increase understanding and encourage open conversation about menopause. We recognise that by raising awareness and offering support and acceptance, the sessions can contribute to a more inclusive workplace.

Integrated Autism Service

The Integrated Autism Service is a multiagency team of local authority and health staff covering the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan area. We provide diagnosis and support for adults with autism. We deliver preventative services and support that meet the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2010.

We gather information about available services which come from local authorities, external service providers, and third-sector organisations. We then support clients to access these services and provide more targeted support if there are barriers.

The Integrated Autism Service's short-term targeted interventions encourage people to be independent and not to become dependent on the team. Appointments are held virtually and in-person. We also offer support through a virtual Advice Hub.

Vale 50+ Strategy Forum and Age Friendly Vale

The Vale 50+ Forum speaks up for the needs of older people in the Vale of Glamorgan. Members are in contact with many local and national working groups. The Forum works closely with the Council to ensure that the interests and welfare of older people are considered. They also receive financial and administrative support from the Council.

A program of meetings and events is held throughout the year and the Forum also readily participates in consultation and engagement activities.

The Forum has an Executive Committee and sub-groups covering transport, health and social care, housing, race equality, arts and leisure, and climate change. The transport group has been preparing a response to a Welsh Government consultation highlighting both national and Vale issues for older people in accessing transport services. Similarly, the health and social care group has been focusing on access to health care. The University Health Board is refreshing its strategy for the next five years and the Forum's work feeds into that. It is also contributing to the Welsh Government's work on social care provision, which will be a live issue over the coming years. The Forum is involved with specific issues in the Vale such as establishing "wellbeing hubs" in rural areas.

The Forum works closely with the Council's Age Friendly Vale Officer. They have held numerous information and social events across the Vale including a Festive Get Together at Christmas in the Civic Office.

The Forum publicly celebrated Intergenerational Week with partners such as Welsh Government and the Older People's Commissioner for Wales. The Council's Younger People's Champion and a representative of the Vale of Glamorgan Youth Parliament attended an Age Friendly Vale workshop to help develop the draft action plan. This reflects that many of the challenges faced by older people are echoed by younger residents.

The Public Services Board promoted Ageism Action Day to encourage people to challenge issues of ageism. This also marked the start of an Age Friendly Vale positive ageing campaign where we asked members of the public to let us know the good things

about growing older. The results of this are being developed into a campaign which we hope to roll out over Summer 2024.

Armed forces and veterans

There are now eleven members in the Served and Proud group for the Armed Forces LGBT+ Community who meet fortnightly in the Firing Line Museum at Cardiff Castle. We supported Race Council Cymru with a successful grant application from the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund. Subsequently, we employed a Project Officer for Ethnic Minority Veterans Support Network with Race Council Cymru, who covers the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff.

We invited members of the Windrush Elders community to the Civic Offices for the unveiling of the Windrush 75 Towers, a touring tribute to the 16,000 Black Caribbean men and women who served in World War II. The Towers were produced in partnership with the National Windrush Museum and the Royal British Legion.

Leisure Services – Vale Sports and Play

- **Play provision**

We identify locations in deprived or rural areas to provide free or low-cost localised play opportunities directly in children's communities, removing travel barriers and enabling children to play without their parents present.

We supported residents to provide Play Streets pilots in Barry, with guidance from the Vale Play Team and Play Wales.

We delivered over ninety sessions of free open access playscheme and Play Ranger sessions across school holidays for over 2000 participants. We provided Play Ranger sessions which encourage outdoor play.

We provided over fifty term-time open access community play sessions through the Play Cubes project to over 700 participants.

We developed opportunities in the Vale country parks including new interactive equipment trails, Forest School sessions run by local groups, and activities delivered by Park Rangers and external providers to over 3,900 school pupils.

We held seven Family Fun Events which attracted more than a thousand participations.

We continued to fund Menter Bro Morgannwg to deliver Bwrlwm open access play provision through the medium of Welsh to over 14,00 participants. We also collaborated on other Welsh language opportunities including family fun events, Anturwyr Bach Winter workshop, a series of workshops in the run up to Gwyl Fach Y Fro event, and Amser Stori in local libraries. A representative from Menter Bro Morgannwg has attended the Vale Play Catch-up workshops.

We secured funding from Public Health Wales Prevention Funding to develop the Prescription for Play project. We created a series of information sheets that contained low-cost activity ideas to encourage families to play in their communities.

- **Inclusive play provision**

We delivered Families First Holiday Club and Teenscheme sessions during school holidays, offering supported access to play for disabled children and young people. We supported Keycreate community organisation to provide weekend play provision for disabled children and their families.

We worked with Flying Start and the Vale's Early Years Additional Needs Team to relaunch the Rainbow group and 1:1 Sense of Play programme.

- **Play areas**

Several existing play areas and recreation spaces across the eastern Vale have been upgraded this year.

- **Schools**

We continued to progress the Play Friendly Schools initiative with schools, helping to provide support with the Play in School Policy. This involves increasing play training for

staff, improving access to play in school grounds, running play workshops for parents and guardians, and introducing Play Champions. Due to the high level of interest from schools, and the limited capacity within the Vale Play Team, we identified three primary schools (St Helens, High Street, and Jenner Park) for the first round.

We worked with the Pencoedre Learning Community to deliver play and sports leadership training to pupils from the five cluster primary schools. The objective is to create play champions who will receive Children’s Rights and Playmaker training, and then support their peers with sport and play.

We worked with young people at Whitmore High School who receive additional support for confidence building and self-esteem. We developed and delivered a successful six-week Forest School programme using outdoor play activities.

- **Representation**

A representative of the Vale Play Team was involved in the Playworks Education Training Centre national working group. They also attend the Welsh Government play and sport national working group, Welsh Government play advisory group, and the Welsh Government ministerial review group that shaped the Ministerial Play Review.

Culture Book

The Vale of Glamorgan Council recognises how diversity, equality, and inclusion strategies have a significant impact on employee attraction, engagement, and retention. The culture book is used as a recruitment tool as well as by staff. We have updated the culture book this year to include Abl and information about the various pledges and accreditations held by the Council:



Our induction programme reinforces our organisational values and culture from the beginning of new starters' Vale employment. The leader of the council joins the session to discuss the value that a gender balanced council brings to the organisation. We advertise the staff networks and encourage new starters to get involved.

Job Evaluation

We have a job evaluation scheme in place. This scheme is for staff paid under the Single Status collective agreement. It makes sure that there is a systematic way of deciding the pay and grade for a job. This results in equal pay for work of equal value. The results of job evaluation are linked to our formal pay and grading system.

It has helped us to pay people fairly and in a consistent way.

There are other factors that affect people's pay such as the type of jobs that they choose to do. Men and women often choose to do jobs that men and women have traditionally done. We call this occupational segregation. It often plays a part in there being a gap between the pay of men and women – a gender pay gap.

As part of our Workforce Plan, we continue to look for ways to reduce the gender pay gap. We think about the knowledge, skills, and experience people need to do the job. We also need to consider the impact of reorganising departments and finding new best practices to work. Using job evaluation helps keep pay and grading fair and consistent.

The Workforce Plan

We have a workforce plan. This plan makes sure that we have:

- the right people
- with the right skills
- in the right place
- at the right time

This helps us to continue to provide our services at a time when there are great financial challenges and increasing demand for our services. We plan to make sure that the

make-up of our workforce reflects the make-up of the local community in terms of protected groups. We are currently reviewing the Council's workforce plan.

We record the protected characteristics of our staff. This means we can compare our statistics with local and national statistics to see what progress we are making. We can then plan how to make improvements.

As part of the workforce plan, we have a strategy to look at increasing the diversity of our employees across all protected groups.

Specified employment information, including information on training and pay

We have been collecting employment data for many years. We have developed new systems that let us report on more protected characteristics. We collect information on the following protected characteristics:

- gender;
- race;
- disability;
- age;
- sexual orientation;
- gender reassignment;
- gender identity;
- national identity;
- religion or belief; and
- marital status

We ask about protected characteristics when people apply for jobs with us.

We improved the way we record this information. Doing this helps to improve what we know about protected groups within our workforce.

We introduced a new employee management system in April 2023, called Fusion. This replaced previous systems for time, leave, payroll, and employee records. Fusion has a self-service capability that allows staff to update their personal details including name, title, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Staff can choose their own title, allowing users to have gender neutral markers on their employee record.

We ran a campaign to encourage staff to update their records on Fusion and add any missing information. Since the campaign, the amount of missing information and 'not recorded' options have decreased by approximately 7%.

We use the Fusion information to get up-to-date snapshots of our workforce. This data informs the quarterly equalities dashboards. These are discussed at various DMTs with Human Resource Business Partners and managers.

You can see what we have found out in [Appendix 5](#) of this report. However here is a summary of the headlines by protected characteristic. The figures refer to corporate staff and do not include staff employed in schools.

The information for this report comes from systems in Human Resources. This means that the information is as correct and complete as possible. We know that we will need to continue to work on this information for future reports. This will help us meet the requirements of the general duty.

Age

- We have fewer employees than this time last year. The only age range that increased is 45-49.
- The age range with the most employees is 55-59 years at 15% of the workforce.
- The highest percentage of applications was from people in the 25-29 age band (22.5%), this remains the same as last year but a higher percentage (15.7%).
- The highest proportion of people attending training came from the 55-59 age group (14.5%).
- Most people who left were between 65+ years of age: 14.6% of all leavers.
- All average salaries increased. The highest increase is for the age range 45-49.
- People between 40 and 44 had the highest average salary, £35,077.

Our Workforce Plan 2021-2025 includes a target to employ more young people, whilst supporting and developing all our employees. The percentage of people aged 16 to 24 employed by the Council has increased from 4.1% to 4.5%.

We continue to look for ways to improve our numbers of young employees and to offer opportunities for those wishing to start their careers with the Council, through apprenticeships, traineeships, graduate opportunities, and work experience. We continue to engage with local employment partners, training providers, schools, and local universities to promote the Council as an employer of choice.

Gender

- Our corporate workforce was 64.2% female and 35.8% male. It is usual to find more women than men working for local authorities.
- The number of female employees has decreased from 1786 to 1533, and the number of male employees has decreased from 908 to 854. More women work in the lower paid casual roles, or front-line care roles, which make up a large position of our corporate workforce. More men make up the workforce in the front-line services for the Corporate Environment & Housing Directorate.
- Most employees continued to work in permanent full-time jobs.
- 65.3% of people who attended training were women and 34.65% were men. These percentages reflect the same proportion of males and females employed.
- Most people applying for jobs were female (59.7%). Again, it is usual to find more women working for local authorities than men.
- More women than men left their jobs. We would expect this as we employ more women than men.
- 36.6% of women and 34.9% of men held jobs paid between £20,000-£24,999.

- 35.8% of all jobs are paid between £20,000 and £24,999. This has gone up from last year because of the pay increases awarded this year and the commitment to pay the real living wage for all staff.
- The average salary for male employees is higher than females. A number of women working in senior positions left in this period which has contributed to an increased pay gap.

National Identity

- Most employees said they were Welsh (969) 40.6% or British (912) 38.2%.
- 1964 applicants said they were Welsh. This remains the highest identity for applicants at 41.8%.
- The highest national identity for leavers is Welsh, at 42.9%, which is expected as most employees are Welsh.
- All groups apart from Northern Irish had an increase in average salary.

We are creating equalities dashboards focusing on all protected characteristics. The dashboards are taken to DMTs by the Human Resources Business Partners to discuss what action, if any, needs to be taken.

Race and Ethnicity

- Most employees (86.6%) identify as White. The highest group was White and British, at 68.7%.
- White and British remains the highest category for applicants at 57.8%. 62.2% of people applying for jobs were White, less than the previous year (76%).
- The number of applicants choosing not to record their race or ethnicity has remained the same as last year 7.4% to last year's 7.5%.

- Over 77.3% of leavers were White. There was an increase in the percentage of White and British leavers which remains the highest group at 64%. This makes sense, as most employees are White.
- All groups had an increase in salary apart from Black-Other which decreased from £28,129 to £26,305. Those identifying as Caribbean had the largest increase from £30,945 to £43,120.
- The number of employees who did not record their ethnicity has drastically decreased on the previous year, but the number who did not disclose their ethnicity increased. This may be due to the new Fusion employee record system.
- There was a significant increase in the number of applicants recording their ethnicity as African, from 268 to 752, a percentage change from 7.7% to 16.0%. Additionally, the number of White and Black African applicants increased from 21 to 68. This is largely due to the overseas recruitment offering we introduced in 2023, which focuses on Social Services recruitment.

An anti-racism dashboard has been created to focus on global majority employees, applicants, and leavers. We have set target equalities figures and have considered the time it would take at our current onboarding rates to reach the target figure. We also have current resident rates available.

We have worked with the Diverse Network and other staff networks to create and develop this dashboard. The dashboard is taken to DMTs by the Human Resources Business Partners to discuss.

Disability

- 73.7% of our staff said they did not have a disability. 3.5% said they had a disability that limited them a little.
- The percentage of applicants who said they had no disability remains the same as last year 85.2%, to last year's 85.3%.

- The number of applicants who said they had a disability has increased from last year, whilst the percentage remains around the same.
- The average salary for all disability related options increased overall.

The Council is registered and committed to the Department of Work and Pensions national 'Disability Confident Scheme'. We have achieved Level 2 - 'Disability Confident Employer'. This helps people to feel confident to apply for jobs and promotion. They can do so knowing that they will not experience discrimination or disadvantage.

We are developing an Attraction and Retention Strategy which will include how we recruit staff in protected characteristics categories. We also work closely with the various networks, including the Abl disabled staff network. As the network progresses, we look forward to more collaboration on this subject.

Sexual Orientation

- Most of our staff said they were heterosexual (68.5%). The percentage of the workforce who said they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual has increased slightly from 2.7% to 3.4%.
- We monitor the success of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people from application to successful appointment. In 2023-24, the success rate for applicants was 16% compared to 25% in the previous year.
- Most applicants said they were heterosexual (81.4%) and unsurprisingly, most leavers also said they were heterosexual 66.2%.
- 53% of LGBTQ+ employees were employed in the salary band £20,000-£29,999 and 30% in salary band £30,000-£39,999.

We work closely with the GLAM network.

An equalities dashboard will be created focusing on all protected characteristics, this will also look at leavers, this dashboard will be taken to DMTs by the Human Resources Business Partners to discuss what action, if any, needs to be taken.

Religion or Belief

- Most staff either had no religion (40.1%), did not record their religion or belief (29.1%), or said they were Christian (28.6%).
- The number of staff who prefer not to disclose their belief has dropped to zero. Whilst a number do not record their belief, it is encouraging that staff are willing to disclose their religion or belief. This could also be due to the new Fusion portal.
- Most applicants stated that they had no religion (40.6%).
- Most employees who attend training say they have no religion (42.9%).
- Most leavers recorded no religion, 37.3% compared to 38.6% last year.

Marital Status

- The number of those who are married remains the highest category in marital status for employed staff at 43.2%, followed by single people at 35.1%.
- Most applications were from single people, 46.4%, like 43.7% last year.
- The number of applications from married people has increased from 1265 to 1657, but that is an overall percentage decrease from 36.4% to 35.3%.
- The number of living together and married leavers have increased, and most leavers were married (40.6%).
- Average pay increased for all groups except for those who said they were in a civil partnership, formerly in a same-sex civil partnership which is now legally dissolved, living together, and separated but still legally married.

Maternity, Paternity, and Adoption

- There were 61 corporate employees who had maternity, paternity or adoption pay and leave during 2023-24, an increase from 58 last year.

Welsh Language

Welsh language courses are available to all staff at all levels. Employees can attend at no cost and during work time through the Work Welsh offer.

- The percentage of our staff saying they have no Welsh language skills has increased from 34.5% to 36.9% this year. These percentages are based on the average of the 'none' option for understanding, speaking, reading, and writing.
- The percentage of staff with Welsh language skills rated between Basic and Fluent have increased but remain between one-fifth and two-fifths: understanding 29.6%; speaking 21.9%; reading 22.0%; and writing 17.5%.
- Welsh language skills for applicants were as follows: understanding 33.1%; speaking 29.1%; reading 26.8%; and writing 22.5%.
- We still receive most applications from people who say they have no Welsh language skills.
- There is decrease in the number of staff who chose not to record their Welsh skills. The percentage of staff with no Welsh skills is still high, but it is encouraging to see an increase in the percentage of staff reporting Welsh skills across all competencies. This hopefully reflects the promotion of Welsh language courses through the Work Welsh scheme.
- The number and percentage of not recorded responses for applicants has increased. This is concerning the Welsh Language Standards state that all jobs should be advertised as Welsh essential/Welsh desirable/or Welsh to be learnt upon appointment, and that we must assess the Welsh language skills of all employees and applicants.

- For staff attending training, there has been a decrease in the number of 'not recorded' and an increase in the number of staff recording their Welsh language skills. We continue to think about how we can promote Welsh language training and to improve opportunities for Welsh language training in line with the Welsh Language Standards.

Moving forward

We will continue with this work. We want to be able to report on all protected characteristics.

We do not have all the information that we need to collect to meet the general and specific duties. This is because reporting systems need further updating and some staff choose not to disclose personal information. Following the implementation of Fusion, we delivered a communication campaign to encourage staff to update and complete their personal information. We will carry out a similar campaign every year.

We may not get the information we need. We think some people choose not to tell us about some of their protected characteristics. We encourage people to do so by explaining:

- why we are asking for this information; and
- how we can use it to better meet their needs.