

Equality Impact Assessment

Corporate and Customer Services Department 2012

1. Introduction

As part of its responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 the council must consider how it can positively contribute to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in its day to day activities. The council is aware of its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty in Wales (the general duty) and the need to show due regard to:

- eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not;
- fostering good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

The protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion of belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The duty also covers marriage and civil partnership but only with regard to eliminating discrimination.

In Wales, under the Welsh Language Act 1993, we also have to treat Welsh and English on an equal basis as well as promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language.

Having due regard to advancing equality means:

- being aware of our responsibilities under the duty;
- removing and minimising disadvantages;
- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different;
- encouraging people to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low;
- making sure we have adequate evidence (including from consultation, if appropriate to enable us to understand the potential effects of their decisions on different people covered by the duty);
- consciously and actively considering relevant matters, in such a way that it influences decision-making;

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- doing this before and at the time a decision is taken, not after the event;
- being aware that the duty can't be delegated to third parties who are carrying out functions on our behalf.

The Act describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Meeting the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others, as long as this does not contravene other provisions within the Act.

The purpose of reviewing the service is to assess its impact on people with protected characteristics and to consider where there are opportunities to promote equality for these groups. We have used national research and the engagement process from our strategic equality plan to inform this assessment on all relevant protected characteristics.

In the Corporate and Customer Services Department we currently monitor the number of gypsy/traveller sites that are reported to the council, together with the number of hate crime incidents that are reported. In addition major documents produced in Welsh and equality and human rights considerations in cabinet reports are audited at regular intervals.

2. Scope of Assessment

This assessment covers the following services:

- equalities
- communications
- improvement and development
- arts
- cabinet and leader's office
- mayor's office
- support services to the above

The aims of these services:

- Equalities - the equalities team is responsible for key policies and guidance linked to legislation and good practice on the protected characteristics identified by the Equality Act 2010 along with the Welsh language. Our priorities are in customer service and in fair access and treatment.
- Communications - the communications unit aims to inform residents and staff about the council's services, seeking at all times to promote and protect the council's reputation.
- Improvement and Development - the improvement and development team aims to promote improvement across the Council and assists in improving, monitoring and reporting on the council's performance. The team also support a programme of improvement reviews.

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- Arts - arts development aims to work across all art forms supporting, developing and promoting arts events, activities and opportunities with arts organisations, groups and individual artists in the Vale.
- Cabinet and Leader's Office - the Cabinet and Leader's office aims to provide organisational, administrative and business support services for executive Members and the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.
- Mayor's office - the Mayor's office aim to provide administrative and functional support to the Mayor,
- Support services – provides support to senior managers and to the department as a whole.

The equality impact of these services has been assessed, and overall there is unlikely to be any adverse impact on protected groups. This assessment has identified that services are robust and although there is little potential for discrimination there are areas where improvements can be made and these have been emphasised. Additionally, the way in which these services are implemented may impact in unanticipated ways and this has also been considered in this assessment.

3. Summary of steps the council has taken to carry out the assessment

Engagement

Consultation sessions have been held with the members of the following groups in developing equalities policies: 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 also attended these sessions.

In addition to these sessions, two focus groups have been held. 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.

Focus groups were held with Welsh (first language) residents in the development of the council's Welsh Language Scheme. From these focus groups, a number of issues were raised about communications to and from the council.

Research and baseline information is available for the Vale of Glamorgan's population via the Census and Welsh Government data, and nationally via specific research such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission's

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publication "How Fair is Wales." Local data is recorded on employees in terms of the protected characteristics of age, gender, ethnic origin, disability and Welsh language ability and in some service areas such as library membership, adult education attendance, and customer satisfaction levels in licensing. Qualitative data has been obtained by engagement with groups representing people with protected characteristics.

The improvement and development team works with all council services and the council's external partners and regulators to meet its statutory duty to deliver and improve local services that meet the needs of residents. The improvement and development team undertakes public consultation projects on behalf of council services, identifying citizen satisfaction levels on many issues including future service developments. Some of the protected characteristics are collected, so that responses can be attributed to particular groups.

The corporate consultation officer manages a citizens' panel of approximately 700 members. The panel is consulted up to five times a year on issues of service delivery. There is monitoring data for the membership of the Citizens' Panel (age, gender, ethnicity, disability). At present respondents to other corporate consultation projects are not monitored.

The biennial resident satisfaction survey provides monitoring information on communications channels (website www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk). The council uses Facebook (Vale of Glamorgan Life) and Twitter (@VOGCouncil) to allow users to engage almost directly with the council.

The Arts section gathers information regarding the following:

- Number of events / projects / workshops other arts activity
- Private view attendance
- Visitor book comments
- Visitor numbers
- Project participation figures
- Feedback information of participatory figures for projects and workshops
- Questionnaires
- Website information/hits
- Marketing materials
- Welsh language

This information isn't broken down into protected characteristics.

The Cabinet and Leader's Office organises the Vale on the Road events, collecting concerns or queries that residents may have about the council's services. Each person will receive feedback on the particular issue that they raised. On these events we use feedback forms for members of the public.

The general office is utilised by staff based in the department. Correspondence is recorded into the department's mail log and given a unique number for reference purposes. Correspondence for action is scanned

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and saved on Trim. All information is stored and secured in line with DPA. Correspondence is welcomed in both English and Welsh, and responses are made in the language of choice of the correspondent.

Research

The council used a variety of sources to gather information including national research such as '[How Fair is Wales](#)' and the '[Not Just Another Statistic](#)' reports; information from council documents such as our [Community Strategy](#), [Corporate Plan](#), and Single Equality Scheme; and feedback from individuals and groups.

Various issues have been identified in the engagement processes. There is a continuing need for managers to ensure that objectives and associated actions are incorporated into specific team plans, employees' training needs assessments, and so on.

Evidence

Evidence obtained from the above research identified that both locally and nationally there are gaps in data monitoring and that public information is not always available in formats that are accessible. Additionally, feedback indicates that there was a lack of awareness of the general and specific equality duties amongst council staff and residents; that engagement and consultation could be improved upon.

Key points from engagement

Data

- Gathering effective monitoring data is essential to improving services and identifying discrimination.
- It must be clear from the outset why we are collecting data and what it will be used for.
- The same process/categories must be used across all services - protected characteristics are not being monitored consistently.
- There are currently gaps in the equality information available.

Accessible Information

- Information is not always delivered in understandable language. This is the case for age, ethnicity, disability.
- The Welsh language website needs to be promoted to ensure sufficient usage.
- 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.

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Raising Awareness

- Training must be accessed by staff so that they better understand individuals' needs.

Engagement

- We need to ensure that we are engaging with people from a wide variety of backgrounds. The specific needs of protected groups needs to be highlighted.
- We need to ensure that we are learning sufficiently from consultation being undertaken, and that changes are made to services as a result of that learning.

Harassment & Discrimination Reporting

- Raising awareness of services to address/prevent harassment should result in higher levels of reporting. We need to promote the hate crime reporting line and services that are available to help people who have experienced discrimination.

Resources

It is anticipated that the requirements established by this assessment can be met from existing resources.

4. Results of the Assessment

We have considered our services from the perspective of each of the protected characteristics. For each service we have looked at research, our own data and other information to tell us whether our service is helping us to achieve the general aim. We have then considered if we need to make improvements and build on good practice.

Improve data gathering

Collect and publish data which shows how services are being used by people from protected groups, and use this information to plan and improve services.

What general research shows

“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

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and how we are making progress as a society towards greater equality.” -
How Fair is Wales

What our information shows

Reporting mechanisms are established in many areas and for specific groups, for example gypsy travellers. However there are some gaps in the equality information available and protected characteristics are not being monitored consistently.

Impact on our ability to meet the general duty

Collecting and using relevant information will be critical to the council in meeting the general and specific duties. The desired outcome is that the council has the best evidence to enable it to set meaningful objectives and carry out fully informed impact assessments.

Publishing this information helps to make policy development more transparent and to explain how and why decisions are made. This will be particularly useful when making difficult resource decisions.

It will also enable the Equality and Human Rights Commission and other interested parties to gauge the council's performance on equality.

What we intend to do - actions

Produce a standard monitoring form with guidance on collecting and monitoring equality data for use throughout the council. (Equalities and Consultation)

Review data collection on protected characteristics, identify gaps and establish a system for collating information for a corporate overview and annual reporting. (Equalities and Consultation)

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. (Equalities)

Design and implement a campaign to help people understand what we are doing and why, in respect of monitoring use of services by protected characteristic. (Equalities & Communications)

Improve data collection in respect of frontline provision in the department (Arts, Cabinet Office)

Accessible information

Review guidance on writing documents so that they can be read easily by people with the general public, and introduce a system that allows only easy to read documents to be published.

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What general research shows

“Staff need to plan ahead in their publishing timetable to ensure that they can factor in the additional time it takes to have information prepared in Welsh and accessible formats.” *Annual reporting, publishing and Ministerial duties: A guide for listed public authorities in Wales*

“The Equality Act 2010 requires anybody who provides services, goods and facilities or who carries out a function to make reasonable adjustments so that disabled people are not put at a substantial disadvantage. This includes taking reasonable steps to ensure that information is provided in an accessible format.” - *Annual reporting, publishing and Ministerial duties: A guide for listed public authorities in Wales*

What our information shows

General guidance for employees is provided by the council’s plain language and style guide that advises on preparing accessible and easy read documents. Feedback from consultation indicates that many service users still find that barriers exist in terms of the council not using plain language in its documents.

Impact on our ability to meet the general duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty in Wales requires the council to take all reasonable steps to ensure that any document or information it is required to publish to meet its general or specific equality duties is published in a form that is accessible to people from protected groups.

What we intend to do - actions

Review and improve guidance on writing easy to read documents, consulting with voluntary organisations with expertise in this area. (Communications and Equalities)

Develop and implement controls to ensure only documents meeting these standards are published. (Communications)

Update guidance on producing easy to read documents. (Communications)

Raise staff awareness of new guidance. (Communications)

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. (Communications)

Raise awareness

Raise awareness of the general and specific public sector equality duties and of issues affecting people with protected characteristics amongst Council staff and residents.

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What general research shows

“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*

What our information shows

Information obtained from the engagement events indicated that awareness raising was essential and that staff don't always understand the issues affecting potential service users. This could result in a fear of putting the clients at risk or offending them or others.

Impact on our ability to meet the general duty

Raising awareness of the specific and general duties will enable the council to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not, and to foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

What we intend to do - actions

Analyse the training needs of Cabinet Members so that equality training can be targeted appropriately. (Cabinet Office and Equalities)

Design and implement a training programme that raises awareness of issues relating to each protected characteristic, and includes training on dealing with reports of harassment. (Equalities)

Evaluate the effectiveness of the training programme. (Equalities)

Undertake publicity to help promote understanding of protected characteristics, and subsequently evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign. (Communications & Equalities)

Develop a list of equalities training undertaken by all departmental staff in the past five years. (Support Services)

Ensure that equalities training is discussed in appraisal and PDR sessions and actively taken up by staff, addressing any gaps in training. (All managers in all departments)

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Engagement

Review engagement and consultation guidance on involving people with protected characteristics in developing, reviewing or changing services.

What general research shows

“...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*

What our information shows

Engagement indicates that there is a perception that consultation is sometimes reactive. Instead there should be an on-going dialogue with service users.

Impact on our ability to meet the general duty

Engagement is a specific requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty in Wales. Effective engagement will enable the council to improve outcomes, for example by identifying particular needs, patterns of disadvantage and poor relations between groups; understanding the reasons for disadvantage, low participation rates and poor relations; designing initiatives to meet needs and overcome barriers; determining priorities; analysing the impact of initiatives on protected groups; monitoring and evaluating initiatives, policies and programmes.

What we intend to do - actions

Develop guidance on involving people with protected characteristics in developing, reviewing or changing services and making decisions that affect services, including providing feedback to them on the results of their involvement. (Equalities & Improvement & Development)

Raise staff awareness of engagement guidelines throughout the Council. (Equalities & Improvement & Development)

Evaluate and report on whether guidance has resulted in people with protected characteristics being more involved in decisions about services. (Equalities & Improvement & Development)

Harassment and discrimination

Increase the use of the hate crime helpline and Citizen's Advice Bureau to report harassment and discrimination of people with protected characteristics and evaluate success.

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What general research shows

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 can lead to significant under-reporting of hate crime. 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, 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. . – *How Fair is Wales*

What our information shows

There has been a significant under-reporting of hate crime incidents on the council's hate crime helpline since its launch in September 2009. Many residents do not feel they can complain about incidences of discrimination in case they receive a lower quality of service in the future, and individuals with protected characteristics often feel as though their comments/complaints/opinions are dismissed by public bodies.

Support for people facing harassment and discrimination has not been accessible and has been poorly used over recent years.

4.5.3 Impact on our ability to meet the general duty

The general duty requires the council to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimising and other conduct prohibited by the Act. Effective recording and monitoring of hate crime incidents enable public authorities to direct their resources where needed and to put in place measures to prevent further incidents.

What we intend to do - actions

Review use of hate crime help line to establish current benchmark of use and identify barriers to reporting hate crimes. (Equalities)

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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. (Equalities and Communications)

Commission the Citizen's Advice Bureau to assist local people to tackle discrimination. (Equalities)

5. Summary of Assessment

The key finding of this assessment is that the procedures and practices of the directorate are robust and that there is limited potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Additional opportunities to promote equality have been identified together with improvements and areas that require further analysis. The continued monitoring and analysis established by this assessment will lead to the identification of further areas for future improvement.

6. Summary of Actions

The above listed actions will be included in service and team plans. Service plans are monitored quarterly by the Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee. Team plans are monitored through team meetings.

The actions from this assessment will be incorporated into individual PDRs to ensure progress towards achieving them.

Completed by:	Beverly Noon	Date:	5/9/12
Agreed by Head of Service		Date:	