

Draft Impact Assessment of Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives January 2012

The Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives contained within it have been developed to document the steps that the Council intends to take to meet its specific duties.

It covers all protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. It contains information about how the Council promotes equality, fosters good relations and deals with discrimination and harassment across all its services.

One of the most important aspects of the Strategic Equality Plan is the information on equality objectives. These describe the areas that the Council has prioritised to improve outcomes for people with protected characteristics. They have been developed by looking at national research, local information and involving groups representative of people with protected characteristics.

The equality objectives are intended to have a positive effect on how services are delivered. They aim to improve the way the Council understands service user needs and provide access to services, reflecting the concerns of people with protected characteristics. They will contribute to the development of a culture within the Council that improves its interaction with service users and other service providers from the perspective of protected groups. The work will be completed within existing resources.

The equality objectives have associated action plans to make them measurable and results orientated. Progress will be monitored quarterly through service plans and progress will be reported through the annual equality report. This report will be published on the Council's website and copies placed in major civic buildings.

The strategic equality plan and equality objectives are likely to impact on other policies and practices as information, knowledge and understanding of issues affecting people with protected characteristics improves during the maximum four year period that the equality objectives will be in place. It is expected that improved data collection and involvement of protected groups in policy development will lead to more robust equality impact assessments.

To formulate the equality objectives, 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 its Community Strategy, Corporate Plan and Single Equality Scheme;
- feedback from people representative of one or more of the protected groups invited to engagement events and focus groups during October and November 2011 to help us develop and prioritise equality objectives.

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Feedback from meetings with organisations representative of protected groups was used to develop and prioritise the equality objectives.

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

In addition to these sessions, two focus groups were 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.

There are gaps in the Council's data and the intention is to address this through one of the equality objectives:

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

This involves establishing a corporate approach to collecting and analysing data and will help the Council identify whether there are different levels of service uptake for different protected groups locally.

There is national evidence to show that some groups experience more discrimination and harassment than others. The key issues for these groups relate to developing better awareness of their characteristics and needs. During engagement events with protected groups, it was felt that these issues relate to all protected groups and that the Council should focus on improving knowledge and awareness across all groups at this stage. This will provide a good platform for identifying future objectives.

Welsh language issues are addressed separately in the Welsh Language Scheme.