

# Strategic Equality Plan

Annual Report 2018-19



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## Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2018-19

We are pleased to present Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual Report for 2018-19 detailing the implementation of our Strategic Equality Plan and our Strategic Equality Objectives. This report outlines our key responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and further details regarding the implementation of our Strategic Objectives can be found in Appendix 1.

Strategic Equality Plans (SEPs) are important documents that set out how public bodies will consider the needs of groups with 'protected characteristics', as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. This is intended to ensure that all individuals receive just and equitable treatment in respect of service delivery and strategy/policy formulation.

During the year, we have started the preparatory work for the revision of our **Strategic Equality Plan** and we will be working in partnership with the Local authorities across Dyfed Powys, both Health Boards, Dyfed Powys Police, Mid and West Wales Fire Service, Wales Ambulance Services NHS Trust, the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Pembrokeshire Coastal National Park Authority and the Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Commissioner, to undertake a detailed engagement and consultation exercise.

Following discussion with partners, the survey focuses on the Equality and Human Rights Commission strategic domains and links closely to the '**How Fair is Wales**' evidence report. Feedback will inform our next Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives and will provide us with revised evidence on which to base our decisions.

We are once again a Proud Employer, through the **Stonewall Diversity Champions** programme and I'm personally looking forward to working with Stonewall Cymru and colleagues to embed inclusion across the authority. Through our previous membership, we learnt so much as an employer and provider of services and we are now ready to build upon that good work. I will also be working with Cllr Mair Stephens and the People Strategy Steering Group, to promote the progress made following our recent Investors in People accreditation, and also to deliver the promises made in our People Strategy.

As a key employer in the county, we have made the transition from the Disability Two Ticks Scheme to being a Disability Confident Employer. **As a Disability Confident Employer we:**

- have undertaken and successfully completed the Disability Confident self-assessment
- are taking all of the core actions to be a Disability Confident employer
- are offering at least one activity to get the right people for our business and at least one activity to keep and develop our people.

As an Executive Board, we have a dedicated Disability Champion, which is Cllr. Jane Tremlett. During the year we have continued to develop the **Carmarthenshire Disability Partnership**, with members of the Carmarthenshire Disability Coalition for Action. Our aim is to discuss key issues and ensure that the Coalition are involved at the early stages of service planning and delivery and that we as an Authority support the group to develop further expertise and knowledge. I look forward to seeing this partnership develop further in the future.

**The Modern Slavery Act 2015** was introduced to criminalise slavery, forced servitude and human trafficking in the UK, we acknowledge our responsibility to the Act and expect our suppliers to observe best practice and continue to seek improvements throughout their supply chains.

During 2018/19, we have signed up to the Welsh Government's **Code of Practice on Ethical Employment in Supply Chains** to show our continued commitment to the development of more ethical supply chains in delivering our contracts. In signing up to the Code we have agreed to comply with the 12 commitments designed to eliminate modern slavery and support ethical employment practices. These commitments will be embedded into the Ethical Employment & Supply Chains Policy which will be led by Cllr. David Jenkins, as Executive Board Member for Resources.

To end, we want to report on arrangements for consulting on the **Council's budget**. It is well known that budget pressures are intensifying. I am firmly committed to making sure that, as far as is possible, budget reductions are fair to all groups. In view of this, arrangements were put in place to consult widely, including with the 50+ Forum and others on which Council services were considered most important. Later in the process, a **budget consultation survey** was developed and all sectors of the community were encouraged to take part. This included representatives of Equality Carmarthenshire. The survey asked people demographic profiling questions, meaning that the views of people from different groups could be understood separately. In summary, this activity helped ensure fairness was integral to the Council's budget decisions.

Naturally, our legal duties are central to all planning and delivery of services, and our workforce has a key role to play in promoting diversity and addressing unfairness.

As a local authority, we recognise that there is more work to be done and we look forward to developing partnerships with our communities and with the protected groups in order to learn more.

**Councillor Cefin Campbell**

**Executive Board Member (Equalities)**

# Section 1 - Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction and background

### Public Sector Equality Duties

#### The General Duty

The aim of the General Duty is to ensure that public authorities and those who carry out a public function consider how they can positively contribute to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in their day-to-day activities.

#### Public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

#### Specific duties in Wales

The Equality Act 2010 made provision for Welsh Ministers to be able to make regulations that place specific public sector equality duties on relevant Welsh public authorities listed in Part 2 of Schedule 19 of the Act.

The duties have been developed to be proportionate in design, relevant to need, transparent in approach and tailored to guide relevant Welsh public authorities towards better performance of the general duty. The ambition is to better meet the needs of the citizens of Wales relying on the services provided to them by the public sector.

The Specific Duties in Wales are set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and came into force on 6 April 2011 and note that the listed bodies will undertake and develop the following requirements:

- Objectives
- Strategic Equality Plans
- Engagement
- Assessing Impact
- Equality information
- Employment information
- Pay differences
- Staff training
- Procurement
- Annual reporting (by Public Authorities and Welsh Ministers)
- Publishing
- Review
- Accessibility

## **Carmarthenshire County Council**

Carmarthenshire County Council published its second Strategic Equality Plan in April 2016 and this review brought an opportunity to look at what has been achieved and to look anew at our priorities as a Council.

Our complaints and compliments procedure is also key to ensuring better services. We will ensure that any complaint, compliment or comment regarding equality is recorded as those relating to equality and we will monitor the situation and report on progress in dealing with them. We intend to strengthen these links and we will ensure that communities, key stakeholders and individuals / groups that represent one or more of the protected characteristics are aware of our procedure.

The Policy and Partnership team works closely with the People Management Division and all council departments to promote the Strategic Equality Plan and to continue to gather evidence which will contribute to the work. The team also works closely with stakeholders over the county, and meet regularly with groups such as the Carmarthenshire Disability Partnership and Equality Carmarthenshire.

### **Well-being objectives**

Following consultation, Carmarthenshire County Council drafted a set of Well-being. These were first approved at County Council on 8 March 2017 and have been reviewed annually since then. The Council's Improvement Objectives are now incorporated in our Well-being Objectives Plan.

There are detailed Action Plans in place to support each Well-being Objective. These will be monitored and reported on through our Performance Management Framework.

Further details regarding the direct contribution towards the 'More Equal' and 'Cohesive Communities' goals can be seen through the detailed planning documents on the Council's corporate website.

## **1.2 Any other information relevant to meeting the duties**

### **Our role as an Employer**

#### **Time to Change Wales**

Time to Change Wales is the first national campaign to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems. The campaign is needed because although mental health problems are very common, it can still be a taboo subject. People who experience mental illness often face stigma and discrimination in the workplace, socially and within families. This can make life with a mental health problem more difficult than the symptoms themselves. The aim is to improve knowledge and understanding about mental illness and, most importantly of all, get people talking about mental health.

The Employee Well-being Team lead on our corporate commitment to the national campaign and have hosted various awareness campaigns such as the 'Time to Talk Day' and the Pledge Cards with the Chief Executive and Elected Members.

#### **Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Policy**

The Council recognises that its employees, men or women, will be amongst those affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence, either as victims/survivors of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence; friends, family or colleagues of victims/survivors; or perpetrators of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence. We have prepared and published a Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Policy, which is available to view in the HR Policies and Guidance Section of the intranet, or via line managers, Trade Union Representatives or the Occupational Health Unit.

Carmarthenshire County Council is committed to ensuring that any member of staff disclosing domestic abuse and/or sexual violence will be listened to and supported.

The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 is a landmark law, the first of its kind in the UK. One of the key mechanisms for delivering the Act in Wales is to ensure that everyone working in Welsh Public Service is aware the nature and impact on those affected by this whatever their gender.

The Learning and Development team have ensured access to the mandatory Welsh Government e-learning module on Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence for all staff. This e-learning provides awareness of the issues and importantly provides an understanding about how staff might help in tackling them.

The Corporate Management Team are committed to ensuring that every part of our workforce has the opportunity to receive the awareness training with alternative arrangements being made available for those who cannot access e-learning. Additional training was also provided for those undertaking professional/specialist roles.

## **Stonewall Cymru Diversity Champions**

Stonewall Diversity Champions programme is an employers' forum for sexual orientation and gender identity equality, diversity and inclusion. The organisation works with over 700 organisations across public, private and third sectors to help them create inclusive and accepting environments for almost a quarter of the UK workforce.

Carmarthenshire County Council has worked in partnership with Stonewall and was a member of its Diversity Champions programme from 2011 to 2016. During each year of membership the Council entered Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (WEI), an evidence-based benchmarking tool used to assess our achievements and progress on LGBT inclusion in our workplace in 10 areas of policy and practice, ranging from training to community engagement.

During 2018-19, we have re-joined the Diversity Champions programme, with a view to undertake a soft audit of our work in readiness for formal submission to the Index in September 2020. We will be working with Stonewall Cymru to establish our priorities for the next year, based on the evidence collated through the audit and in discussion with our People Strategy Steering Group.

Progress will be reported as part of the 2019-20 annual report.

## **Our role as a provider of services**

### **Wales Interpretation and Translation Service**

The authority is a partner in the Welsh Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS). This body acts as a “one-stop-shop” designed to improve access to public services for vulnerable people whose first language may not be English or Welsh. WITS provides the Authority with access to trained, accredited, fully security vetted translators and interpreters covering approximately 135 languages.

### **Inequalities in Education**

All schools are required to publish **Equality Objectives** and a **Strategic Equality Plan** that records how the school is responding to equality issues. The purpose of the objectives and plan is to enable the delivery of measurable equality outcomes which improve the lives of individuals and communities.

### **Housing Related Support Service**

Housing Services have developed a new Housing support service for people over the age of 55 and people with dementia irrelevant of age. This will be across tenure (private or public) and be given where the need for housing related support has been identified.

If someone has housing support needs they will receive support irrelevant of whether they are a Carmarthenshire County Council tenant or not. This will be a much fairer service, extending to those who are home owners or private tenants. The service will be a floating support service for Older People which will provide housing related support to enable people to develop the skills and confidence needed to live independently in their own homes.

## **Our role as a Community Leader**

### **Syrian resettlement**

Since the start of the scheme in Carmarthenshire in June 2016, we have resettled 29 families through the Syrian resettlement scheme, with a total of 133 people. We have found homes for the families in Llanelli, Carmarthen, Ammanford, Kidwelly, Pontyberem, Llandeilo and Garnant, all privately-owned homes managed by Council staff through the Council's Simple Lettings scheme.

### *Governance*

We have a multi-agency task group which meets every two months, to ensure that all relevant agencies are working together to deliver the scheme effectively.

Membership – Housing, Education / Children's Services, Communities for Work, Hywel Dda University Health Board, Dyfed Powys Police, Department of Work and Pensions, Coleg Sir Gâr, Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services, Ethnic Youth Support Team. The Group is chaired by Executive Board Member for Housing.

A panel with representation from Hywel Dda University Health Board; Mental Health & Learning Disabilities; Education & Children's Services and Homes & Safer Communities checks new referrals before accepting families for resettlement.

### *Education*

All school-age children are found school places as near as possible to their homes. All adults are attending English classes, organised by Community Education. A number of the children have additional learning needs. The scheme funding is used to provide extra support to these children in the classroom, both of staff and other resources.

### *Health*

All families are registered with a local GP practice, and are helped to access dentistry through the community dental service. A high proportion of the families have family members with serious health issues, such as heart disease, bullet wounds, embedded shrapnel, post-traumatic stress and diabetes.

### *Support*

Resettlement support is provided to each family from the moment they arrive in the UK. They are picked up from the airport and brought to their new homes. They are introduced to the various services that they will need immediately, such as GPs, schools, English classes, housing staff, Job Centres.

As well as individual support, we also hold family information sessions around every two months. Relevant agencies come to speak to the families together, with interpretation available throughout the event.

In August 2018, the Carmarthenshire Syrian community organised a regional picnic in Llandovery Rugby Club, which was attended by Syrian families from all over Mid and West Wales.

Two families have moved out of the County since the scheme started, both to take up offers of employment in England.

Syrians resettled in Carmarthenshire, as well as Jonathan Morgan (Head of Homes and Safer Communities) and Cllr. Linda Evans (Executive Board member) travelled to the Senedd for an event in April 2019 to promote Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary. Ahmad Al Dalli spoke at the event to thank the services which have been supporting the families to build new lives in Wales.

### *Employment*

Finding employment is the biggest challenge facing the adult family members, as it has proved difficult to find similar jobs to those they are used to whilst still developing their English language skills. Some adults are attending courses at Coleg Sir Gâr to retrain and gain formal qualifications. Others are working with Business Wales with a view to becoming self-employed. Once the person's business plan has been approved by Business Wales, we help with a small grant towards tools and equipment to help start the business. Communities for Work and Remploy are also involved in supporting individuals into employment.

We are also developing responses to this issue, in partnership with Community Education, Coleg Sir Gâr and Adult Learning Wales to ensure that the Syrian adults are able to gain qualifications that will allow them to access employment which suits their abilities and potential.

### *Community cohesion*

Generally, the response of the local community to all the Syrian families has been excellent, and many are becoming a valued part of the communities in which they live. However, it would be naive to think that all members of the host community have this positive view of Syrian resettlement. We have put in interventions from experienced staff in local schools, which were successful in resolving tensions, in partnership with the police and the schools concerned. We are now developing a pro-active service in partnership with neighbouring local authorities to work with pupils across the Mid and West Wales region to raise awareness of these issues.

### *Future of the scheme*

This time last year the Home Office was consulting on what the resettlement programme should look like after March 2021. Since then, the Home Office has announced that there will be no further arrivals under the current scheme after March 2020. However, progress on developing and consulting on a replacement scheme has stalled in recent months.

## **Carmarthenshire Disability Coalition and Partnership**

The Council continues to support the work of the Coalition and benefits from its feedback and advice. For instance, work has been undertaken to improve the accessibility of information, this includes work to ensure that the Council's website is fully accessible to screen reader software, electronic documents are now published in Welsh and English single language versions and improvements have been made to the format of printed letters to help accessibility.

Relationships between the Council and the Coalition have been enhanced through bi-monthly meetings of the Carmarthenshire Disability Partnership, chaired by the Executive Board Member for Disabilities, Cllr Jane Tremlett. During the year, the Partnership have discussed various issues including key consultations held by Public Sector bodies in the county, improving access at Pembrey Country Park and the Social Services and Well-being Act.

## Section 2 - Identifying, collecting and using relevant information

### 2.1 Our communities

#### Statistical background

Carmarthenshire has an estimated population of 184,681 and a population density (population count/area in sq km) of 78 people per square km. The County is very diverse and rural. It consists of 58 Electoral Wards with 74 Elected Members. Demographic Profiles have been produced of each of the Electoral Wards and for the County which provides a picture of life in the individual communities as well as valuable local information. The profiles will give you information such as:

- Population Statistics
- Population density
- Birth and Death rate
- 2011 Census Data
- Housing Information

The Ward Profiles can be accessed through the Council's corporate website.

Statistical information provides us with a useful baseline of information; however, the Census results do not provide information on all protected characteristics.

As a local authority, we are able to access a wealth of data. Our key aim during the preparation of the evidence report was to identify data to support the General Duty in:

1. Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
2. Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
3. Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

### 2.2 Our staff

Carmarthenshire County Council has been collecting employment data for a number of years, on the groups required at the time. Our Workplace Profile Report can be viewed on our corporate website. Following the publication of the Equality Act 2010 and the Specific Duties for Wales 2011, the People Management division have been working to update our recruitment monitoring forms and our Resource Link software, in order to collect the new data on the wider protected characteristics. This is a continuous process.

## Section 3 – Equality Impact Assessments

Equality Impact Assessments are a key element of the Strategic Equality Plan and objectives and are integral to all budgetary, policy and strategy decisions. Heads of Service and Budget Managers are required to complete an assessment of all policy decisions as part of the budget setting process. It is also key that assessments are undertaken as part of all policy and strategy developments and that the Organisational Change template is completed when there are HR considerations.

The Policy and Partnership Team are leading on the introduction of an Integrated Assessment. This is due to the fact that the Council has a statutory requirement to complete impact assessments under a number of new and existing legislation.

These requirements are legal obligations for the Council and failure to meet these duties may result in the Council being exposed to legal challenge.

This integrated assessment (which will be introduced during 2019-2020) incorporates the requirements of the following Acts into one Impact Assessment:

- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010
- Welsh Language Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) & Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011
- Environment (Wales) Act 2016 – Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty
- General Data Protection Regulation.

## Section 4 – Training

The Council's Learning and Development Team prepare an annual Learning & Development Plan which outlines all the training and development opportunities available - including Equality and Diversity opportunities. Line Managers are required to discuss learning and development opportunities as part of staff appraisal and ensure that staff have opportunities to develop professionally. All new members of staff are required to complete "Engaging Diversity", an on-line learning module within six months of appointment. All Managers and Senior Managers are required to attend the Behavioural Standards in the Workplace training and, if involved in recruitment activities, Recruitment and Selection Training.

## Section 5 – Procurement arrangements

The Policy and Partnership Team work closely with the Procurement Unit to ensure compliance. One of the key documents is the Supplier Qualification Information Database (SQulD). This Information is a template provided by the Value Wales Division of the Welsh Government.

The SQulD has been designed to simplify and standardise the selection stage of procurement whilst improving transparency. This approach also makes it easier for small businesses to tender for public sector contracts. Information in relation to Equalities is included in the SQulD documents and all potential suppliers must complete the section. The SQulD template specifically asks prospective suppliers for information in relation to any findings of unlawful discrimination by an Employment Tribunal, an Employee Appeal Tribunal, or any other court and/or any complaints upheld following an investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission or its predecessors (or comparable body in any jurisdiction other than the UK) on grounds of alleged unlawful discrimination. The guidance clearly notes that any prospective suppliers, who hold any findings against them, will not be selected to tender, unless they have provided adequate evidence that they have taken appropriate action to stop it happening again.

### **Welsh Government Code of Practice – Ethical Employment in Supply Chains**

The Ethical Employment in Supply Chains Code of Practice has been established by the Welsh Government to support the development of more ethical supply chains to deliver contracts for the Welsh Public Sector. During the year, officers from Corporate Procurement, People Management and Policy have prepared an Ethical Employment & Supply Chains Policy for consideration by the Executive Board.

An update on the Council's action plan on the 12 Commitments designed to eliminate modern slavery and support ethical employment practices will be provided in the 2019-20 report, alongside an update from the Ethical Employment Elected Champion.

## Section 6 – Contact details

For further information on Carmarthenshire County Council's Strategic Equality Plan, please contact:

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