

# Strategic Equality Plan

## Annual Report

2019-2020

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Cyngor **Sir Gâr**  
**Carmarthenshire**  
County Council



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## Foreword to the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2019-20

We are pleased to present Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual Report for 2019-20 detailing the implementation of our Strategic Equality Plan and our Strategic Equality Objectives.

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 undertaken the revision of our **Strategic Equality Plan** and have worked 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.

A mixed methods approach was employed to collect the views and experiences of stakeholders across Dyfed Powys. It was agreed to produce one central survey (and sister versions) and where possible, to hold local stakeholder events. This approach increased the robustness of collected data and facilitated comparability of results.

Following discussion with partners, the survey focused on the Equality and Human Rights Commission strategic domains and linked closely to the '**How Fair is Wales**' evidence report. The feedback has informed our next Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives and has provided 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.

During the year, we have worked to develop a **Diversity and Equality Promotion Calendar and a Flag and illumination protocol**. The aim of the calendar, which will be implemented during 2020-21, is to provide a standardised and authorised timetable of key equality and diversity celebratory / designated days. The calendar aims to provide a platform for both internal and external communication, across all of the protected characteristics, as noted in the Equality Act 2010. I will look forward to providing an update on the calendar in the 2020-21 report.

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

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

### **Investors in People**

Once again, the Council has achieved the highest award in recognition of the work we do to support our staff's health and well-being. The Platinum Corporate Health Standard is the quality-mark for workplace health promotion in Wales led by the Welsh Government. Carmarthenshire County Council is the only Local Authority in Wales to hold this award and has done so since 2009. Organisations are re-assessed every three years and this year we have been revalidated with the Gold and Platinum awards.

To achieve the Platinum award, we had to demonstrate business excellence and sustainable development as an integral part of business practice and culture.

### **Time to Change Pledge**

The Time to Change Wales pledge is a public declaration that an organisation wants to step up to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination. It isn't a quality mark, accreditation or endorsement. Organisations have to commit to taking actions that are realistic and right for them that will lead to a reduction in discrimination within your organisation and the wider community.

More organisations stepping up to make the organisational pledge means that more is being done to help break the silence around mental health. This pledge sends a powerful message that mental health is something that can be talked about, and that stigma and discrimination are not welcome.

We are continuing our commitment to reducing the stigma of mental health conditions.

Carmarthenshire County Council has re-signed the Time to Change Pledge which confirms our continued support, priority and work on reducing mental health discrimination and the stigma around the topic. Alongside this, work continues on our mental health action plan which works in partnership with the authority's wellbeing agenda.

Since first signing the pledge in 2015 we have created a mental health e-learning module and rolled out mental health awareness training for managers and all staff across the authority.

We are also looking to recruit mental health first aiders/supervisors across the authority and in our schools as well as recruiting a new Well-being Coordinator which will focus on mental health and initiatives supporting this work.

### **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.

During the year, we have worked closely with Stonewall Cymru to undertake a soft audit of our work in readiness for formal submission to the Index. 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.

Colleagues from Stonewall held a tailored session with our Procurement Team to discuss opportunities to promote equality and diversity within our tender documents and contracts. Pre-tender documents include questions regarding whether a supplier has an equality and diversity policy in place that explicitly bans bullying and harassment on all protected characteristics in the Equality Act.

### **Pay Differences**

Equal Pay Audits are calculated and published annually to continue to monitor pay gap. Recommendations to work towards a further reduction in the pay gap are made to the Corporate Management Team and Heads of Service. The trend since first published in 2013/14 shows an annual reduction in the pay gap to date, which is a result in the main to the implementation of single status, a new pay model, monitoring the application of pay elements and commitment to living wage.

We continue to gather data on all protected characteristics with a view to being able to include more characteristics in future audits. Collation of data is undertaken at the point of recruitment and through annual reminders to staff. Following soft audit feedback from Stonewall Cymru, how we describe protected characteristics in our Equal Opportunity Monitoring form has been reviewed and our web recruitment and payroll systems are being updated to reflect the changes. On completion, the Council will undertake another promotional campaign to encourage employees to complete equality monitoring which is a voluntary declaration.

### **Learning Disabilities Charter**

Over the past 5 years, people with learning disabilities in Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion have worked together to develop a Charter – a simple list of things they expect, and need, to live fulfilling lives. The Charter has been developed with support from the Welsh Government's Intermediate Care Fund, the West Wales Care Partnership, and Pembrokeshire College. It is supported by the County Councils of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire, and the Hywel Dda University Health Board. Organisations, companies, and individuals can sign the Charter and commit to treating everyone equally. There will be a quality mark developed which will be awarded to organisations or businesses who demonstrate they live up to the standards and aspirations of the charter.

### **50+ Forum**

Hundreds of people came together to discuss health, well-being, and the growing use of technology as part of Carmarthenshire's annual 50+ Forum in September 2019.

The popular event brings together a wide variety of people and over 30 organisations and provides opportunity to reflect positively on ageing as well as focusing minds on the needs of the county's older people. The National Botanic Garden of Wales hosted the event, where guest speakers included Dr Charles Musselwhite and Allyson Rogers of Swansea

University's Centre for Innovative Ageing, and Julie Morgan AM, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services.

This year's key themes reflected what the forum's 2,000 strong membership have said is important to them. On-line technology, mobility and access to transport were high on the agenda, with keynote speakers touching on these points.

Members also had the chance to take part in a series of workshops focusing on digital health monitoring, banking, shopping, communication, and research, as well as spotting and avoiding scams. There were also well-being workshops, tasters and demonstrations in arts and crafts, exercise and ageing well.

The annual event is supported by Carmarthenshire County Council and Welsh Government.

### **Carmarthenshire Disability Coalition and Partnership**

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.

The Council continues to support the work of the Coalition and benefits from its feedback and advice. A key example of the involvement of the Partnership can be seen as Case Study 3.

### **White Ribbon Campaign**

We are proud to support White Ribbon Day on November 25, which aims to raise awareness and work towards ending male violence against women. Residents can also show their support by making the pledge online to "never commit, excuse or remain silent about male violence against women."

While domestic abuse affects both sexes, the largest number of violent incidents involve men against women. However, ultimately male violence against women is everyone's issue, not just women.

Men can sign up to become a White Ribbon Ambassador and women a Champion and help promote awareness of the campaign and engage with men and boys to step up and call out violent behaviour among their 'peers.'

Once again, this year Carmarthenshire County Council showed its support by flying the White Ribbon flags at its council buildings in Carmarthen (County Hall), and town halls in Llanelli and Ammanford on 25 November and continued its promotion through the following 16 days of action.

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

### **2.1 Our communities**

#### Statistical background

Carmarthenshire has an estimated population of 186,452 and a population density (population count/area in sq. km) of 77 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 can 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 several years and has developed specific resources to explain to staff why the information is collected and how the data can influence our workplace policies and support for staff. Our detailed Workplace Profile Report can be viewed on our corporate website. Following the publication of the Equality Act 2010, the division have been working to improve the collection of workforce data and we recognise that 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 was due to be introduced during 2019-2020 but has been delayed due to COVID-19) 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.

Further work on introducing the integrated assessment will be finalised during 2020-21.

### **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

(SQuID). This Information is a template provided by the Value Wales Division of the Welsh Government.

The SQuID 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 SQuID documents and all potential suppliers must complete the section. The SQuID 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.

The Executive Board have also nominated an Ethical Employment Elected Champion, Cllr. David Jenkins.

## **Section 6 - Revision of the Strategic Equality Plan**

Our Strategic Equality Plan, (SEP), sets out how we, as Carmarthenshire County Council, will ensure that our actions are fair to all. Being treated fairly and with respect is relevant to all of us and to our families and friends.

During 2019-20 we have revised our SEP to build on our previous plans of 2012-16 and 2016-2020. The plan was written after carrying out engagement with the public and key stakeholders as part of a Mid and West Wales partnership with other public service bodies during the summer of 2019.

This included a joint survey to gather views on how people from different backgrounds experience six major areas of life.

- Education
- Work
- Living Standards
- Health
- Justice and personal Security
- Participation

The Strategic Equality Objectives are based on the needs and issues raised during engagement and consultation and *'Is Wales Fairer 2018?'*. We have also considered the Strategic Objectives as set by the Welsh Government and how we are able to contribute to those objectives.

Taking the above information into account, we have set the following equality objectives for 2020-24 for Carmarthenshire County Council:

1. Being a leading employer
2. The needs and rights of people with Protected Characteristics shape the design of services
3. Safe and Cohesive communities that are resilient, fair, and equal
4. Improving access to our services and access to our environment.

**Appendix 1** of this Annual Report is our action plan for 2021-22. We will take the opportunity to update our action plan through the annual report, on an annual basis.

## **Case study 1: Community Cohesion**

Community Cohesion is funded by the Welsh Government, there are 8 Co-ordinators across Wales and Officers working alongside them. Kay Howells is the Community Cohesion Coordinator for Mid and South West Wales (Ceredigion, Powys, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire), she came into post in July 2019 and there are two officers in the team, Paul Davies who works across Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire and Sarah Bowen who works across Ceredigion and Powys who began work in December 2019.

Community Cohesion has a wide brief including Hate Crime, Cohesion Campaigns, Work with Refugees, Modern Slavery, work with the Gypsy Traveller Community and work looking at the impact that Brexit may be having upon our communities. In relation to this area of work, the team are tasked with ensuring that as many EU Citizens in the County have applied to the EU Settlement Scheme.

### **Hate Crime**

Schools across Carmarthenshire have been identified to receive Critical Thinking Training linked to Hate Crime within Schools. This training has been funded by Welsh Government and has been developed by the WLGA. 100 schools across Wales will be targeted for this training. It has been launched to help school children in Wales and their teachers learn to better identify and respond to hate speech and misinformation, and to ensure schools. Pupils and teachers from 5 secondary schools across the county will receive this training.

### **Community Cohesion Films**

Community Cohesion are developing a series of short films to raise awareness of key cohesion issues. They will be released during key campaign periods during 2020. Films will focus on raising awareness of Hate Crime in collaboration with Victim Support,. This will be released in Hate Crime Awareness Week 2020. We are also developing films for other campaigns during the year including one for Refugee week with the purpose of promoting integration and diversity and to showcase positive stories of Syrian Refugees who have settled in Mid and South West Wales, Disability Awareness and a general film on what is Community Cohesion.

### **EU Settled Status (EUSS)**

The Community Cohesion team have a communication plan for engaging with EU Citizens living in Carmarthenshire to promote EUSS and encourage EU Citizens to apply to the scheme. We have linked in with third sector agencies who offer EU Citizens advice. Specifically we have:

- Set up training sessions for our frontline staff so they are able to signpost EU citizens to appropriate support and guidance.
- Developed a promotional campaign using media, bus stop advertising, social media and and press releases
- Developed and attended a number of events to promote EUSS

- Contacted key employers, schools and other organisations who have contact with numbers of EU Citizens to promote the scheme.

### **Small Grant funding for Cohesion Projects**

In December 2019, the team promoted a new small grants fund which community groups across the region could apply for funds to develop project work to support community cohesion in their areas. 3 projects have been funded in Carmarthenshire and are running between January – March 2020. The projects are:

#### Story Connections – People Speak Up

8 sessions to develop a project that brings people from diverse communities together to share space and create stories. Working with a wide range of partners including Syria Sir Gâr, Llanelli Pride, Ffwrnes Theatre and Youth service, the project will culminate with a case study film showcasing the project.

#### Friends and Neighbours (FAN) Together in Llanelli

The aim of this project is to start a FAN group in Llanelli and to train FAN facilitators to run the group so it is sustainable in the future. The group will celebrate the diversity of Llanelli and the opportunities available in the future. FAN offers people from a diverse range of backgrounds the opportunity to come together, meet new people from different cultures, build confidence and foster kinship and mutual understanding and respect.

#### Carmarthenshire International Women’s Day Celebrations and Community Awards Ceremony, Llanelli Community Partnership

This event will celebrate diversity and will feature inspirational speakers from all walks of life and backgrounds. In attendance will be a wide range of organisations and community groups with an emphasis on Community Cohesion and community safety, including Syria Sir Gâr and Llanelli Multicultural Network. There will be information stalls and stands from Victim Support, Race Council Cymru and Dyfed Powys Police.

### **LGBTQ+ engagement work**

The team have supported the set up of a LGBTQ+ Youth group at Dr Mz in Carmarthen. Recent research demonstrated that many of the LGBT youth in Carmarthen don’t always feel that generic provision is affirming/safe enough, with bullying (online and in person) cited as the most significant problem. In October 2019, they hosted a meeting of LGBTQ+ adults, interested parents of LGBTQ+ children and young people - the outcome being the development group who now meet monthly.

### **Parents' feedback....**

"It has been invaluable, my child had become isolated at school and this has given them a completely safe space to be around other young people having similar life experiences, their confidence has improved, they've started a relationship with another young attendee and literally cannot wait to attend each session." Mum of a non-binary, bisexual 15 year old

"It's been amazing for my child, somewhere they can let down their guard and feel safe to be the person they actually are without constantly having to hide or justify themselves. They get so weary of having to be constantly on guard, it's exhausting, but they so much look forward to going to the group and relaxing, making friends and enjoying themselves, as a teenager should be able to, without fear." Mum of a non-binary, bisexual 14 year old

"Although the group has only been in existence for a short time, it already feels like a warm, welcoming and supportive place. The youth leaders really understand what our kids are experiencing, which is vital. She has made friends and has come back home each time with a huge grin." Mum of a 14 year old Cis lesbian.

## Case Study 2: Marking the Holocaust



For four years running now, Carmarthenshire County Council's Department of Education has organised an event for its secondary school pupils to mark the Holocaust. The above logo represents the Holocaust Educational Trust. The aim is for young people to improve their knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust as well as subsequent genocides, and for them to learn about the dangers of prejudice and racism and where these can ultimately lead.

Initially the event took the form of viewing a live webcast with a survivor organised by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust but, following feedback from pupils in 2018, the Department has sought out and invited survivor speakers to share their experiences in person.

In 2019, pupils had the privilege of meeting Marie Christine Nibagwire, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide. Carrying her daughter on her back, Marie-Christine crossed three other African countries, on foot, experiencing much abuse as well as hunger before coming to the UK as an illegal immigrant, seeking asylum, and eventually being granted citizenship. She now devotes her time to counselling other survivors, sharing stories of the loss and suffering such atrocities can cause, and teaching the values of love, justice, and respect as the foundations for peace. Her testimony was followed by a workshop for pupils led by the county's Minority Ethnic Achievement Service, raising awareness of the plight of present-day refugees, and a presentation by Glan y Môr school pupils, showcasing the ChangeMakers initiative which has helped them challenge discrimination.

In 2020, to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz Birkenau, the Department applied successfully to the Holocaust Education Trust for the Holocaust survivor, Eva Clarke, to share her testimony. Due in large part to her extraordinary courage and strength of character, Eva's mother, Anka, survived Theresienstadt, Auschwitz concentration camp, Freiburg slave labour camp, and finally Mauthausen death camp in Austria, where, weighing just 5 stone, she gave birth to daughter Eva in a coal truck on 29th April, 1945. Eva and her mother were the only survivors of their family, her father and 14 other close relations having been killed in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Sixty Year 10 and 11 students and their teachers from ten Carmarthenshire Schools gathered at Neuadd y Gwendraeth, Drefach, on 28 February, 2020, to hear Eva's moving testimony and were given the opportunity to ask her their own questions. The questions posed showed that pupils were fully absorbed by and engaged with the experience and they demonstrated both sensitivity and insight.

Following this session, pupils participated in two workshops. The first of these was led by local Holocaust Education Trust volunteer and educator, Elaine Thomas. This gave further context to Eva's experiences and enabled pupils to improve their knowledge of the legal measures enacted against Jews during the Nazi period, prompting reflection on the human impact brought about by this legislation. The second workshop was led by event organiser, Polly Seton, Carmarthenshire's Global Learning officer. In this session, pupils were reminded

that tragically there have been other genocides since the Holocaust, that racism and hate crimes are on the increase, and that name-calling and stereotyping can escalate and ultimately lead to violence. Pupils and their teachers then discussed positive actions they could take as individuals and as school communities.

Following the workshops, Louise Morgans, Creative Arts Officer, read the poem “The Butterfly” written by Pavel Friedmann, the Jewish Czech poet who was killed in Auschwitz. Pupils were inspired by this and by Eva’s testimony to create paper butterflies for a commemorative art piece to remember and honour those who have perished in genocides.

As a council, we are immensely grateful to Eva Clarke for making the long journey from Cambridge to Drefach and to the Holocaust Education Trust for their support with the event. This has been an unique opportunity and has made a lasting impression on our young people and helps us all to realise the dangers of hatred and bigotry as well as the importance of promoting empathy and taking action to challenge racism and prejudice today.



### Case study 3: The Disability Partnership and Pentre Awel

[Pentre Awel](#) is a 'once in generation' development located across 86 acres of brownfield land in south Llanelli. Pentre Awel will co-locate public (local government, health board), academia, private and voluntary sectors to create an ecosystem for education, research and development, business incubation and broader wellness initiatives and will create approximately 1,800 jobs and improve social, economic and environmental well-being across the region.



Pentre Awel has benefited from extensive public and stakeholder engagement at all stages of the project. The graphic included shows a vision of how Pentre Awel will look. In particular, the project team engaged the Carmarthenshire Disability Partnership (CDP) during the design development phase to allow due consideration to be given to accessibility and inclusivity in relation to building facilities and layout.

Arup – the design consultants for the project – presented plans/schematics to the CDP as they evolved and sought feedback on a number of topics within the remit of the Group, including: welfare provision (accessible toilets), public transport, disabled car parking, hydrotherapy pool access, changing places facilities and accessible public realm environments.

Following initial engagement, ongoing dialogue with the project team was maintained by way of written and verbal updates in order to keep the CDP apprised of the design development process.

#### Benefits:

- Project team able to engage with a key demographic group and communicate important/tailored messages
- Ability to improve public understanding of the proposals and services
- CDP members were able to provide specialist input / feedback
- The project team were able to consider any perceived barriers to access prior to development
- CDP were able to provide effective scrutiny and challenge
- CDP could become advocates for the project within their stakeholder networks

Lessons/Best Practice:

- In order for the engagement to be meaningful and constructive, it is important to consult at the formative stages of the project where there is scope to influence the designs / decision making process
- Early and frequent engagement with stakeholders can build trust and lead to better outcomes
- Remember to 'close the loop' following engagement
- Given the breadth of the topics under discussion, additional meetings were scheduled with the Group to provide sufficient time to consider the proposals

## Contact details

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

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