

Monmouthshire Strategic Equality Plan 3 - 2020 – 2024.

Progress report

Monmouthshire County Council has produced its third Strategic Equality Plan. This gained agreement by Council on the 5th March 2020. This particular document gives some examples of the desired outcomes, the actions and the progress made so far.

Objective 1: Give children the best possible start in life overcoming barriers to attainment and opportunity

Outcome: Children & young people have sufficient opportunity to participate in play and physical activity

Action: Carry out an annual Play sufficiency assessment. (PSA)

Progress: The previous PSA Action Plan gained approval in May 2019 and progress has been good (a full report is now available). A new plan is in place for 2021/22 with the next full 3-year review scheduled for 2022. A new target has been identified which relates to increasing the number of fixed play opportunities for wheelchair users.

Outcome: Children with disabilities are able to access sporting activities.

Action: Put an action plan in place to achieve the Disability Sports Gold Award.

Progress: Mon Life's Health, Communities & Inclusion Development Officer is establishing the starting point for the pathway to Gold through reflections and review of feedback from Silver accreditation and developing a consultation process and Monmouthshire's Vision for Gold. Four sector partners identified as being key areas for progress are, Education, Health, Social Services and Mon Life's wider service area.

Objective 2: Overcome inequalities in access to economic prosperity

Outcome: People have the opportunity to raise their household income.

Action: Work as part of the Cardiff Capital Region to attract high skill, high wage jobs.

Progress: There are regular monthly update meetings held with the Director of the Cardiff Capital Region. These meetings attended by our Leader, Chief Executive, Chief Officers for Resource and Enterprise and Head of Enterprise and Community Animation discuss further opportunities for inward investment and job growth in the County

Outcome: Households are able to maximise their incomes and minimise their outgoings.

Action: Continue to develop a tackling poverty plan for the county aligned to the aspirations of the Social Justice Strategy.

Progress: The Tackling Poverty and Inequality Action Plan is to be presented to Cabinet for approval on 3rd March 2021 as part of the third revision of the Social Justice Strategy

Objective 3: Create cohesive communities

Outcome: Better data is available about hate-based bullying.

Action: Improve recording of incidents of hate-based bullying and piloting appropriate interventions.

Progress: The Bullying Inclusion Task + Finish Group is looking to introduce the Welsh Government recording process across the county. The aim is to ensure a level of consistency in the data collected and once the system is finalised it will be disseminated to all schools.

Outcome: A reduction in the effects of loneliness and isolation

Action: To deliver the outcomes under the Connected Monmouthshire Plan.

Progress: Engagement with Town and Community Councils were key in understanding local approaches to supporting those affected by this agenda – what exists and where does it take place, who attends and conversely, what does not exist, why not and who needs it. Engagement with our older population has been straightforward and pre- Covid, there were many opportunities for this particular cohort to stay engaged and take part in community activities of interest to them. Similarly, engagement with our younger people has taken place via our Monmouthshire Youth Forum and other youth groups. This has been an easy process to undertake.

It has been widely acknowledged that we need to better understand those that sit in the middle of these two cohorts; our working-age population. Steps have been taken to try and understand the ‘measures of loneliness,’ and a survey was developed with two themes on loneliness and isolation (L & I):

1. L & I within the work environment,
2. L & I within the community where individuals live

The demographics have been analysed in order to measure whether there is any correlation between the two.

Council employees were utilised as the ‘pilot’ for the survey and there was approval given by all relevant Trade Unions for this approach. There have been several attempts made to push the survey out across all teams and departments,

recognising that not all staff have access to digital communications. The current situation is that the survey is still open, and all colleagues are welcome to participate, anonymously, to help inform possible actions the council may need to implement.

Outcome: (2) Improve the support for workforce mental health

Action: Improve the support for workforce mental health.

Progress: There is a range of support that is accessible to all colleagues e.g. – counselling/ the GO TO group/ informal peer- to - peer conversation / coaching/ mentoring/ counselling/ Occupational Health.

Objective 4: To provide services that are accessible to our public and support our workforce.

Outcome: A fully accessible website providing information about council services.

Action: Refresh the council's website to ensure it meets the latest web content accessibility guidelines.

Progress: The council website has been subject to the WCAG 2.1 website accessibility project. The results show a remarkable increase in its accessibility rating according to the scoring criteria. Funding to enable this excellent project to continue for 2021 – 2022 is available.

Outcome: Improved services for dealing with mental health in Monmouthshire

Action: Improve the support for workforce mental health

Progress: There is a range of support that is accessible to all colleagues e.g.– counselling/ the GO TO group/informal peer to peer conversation/ coaching/mentoring/counselling/Occupational Health.

Objective 5: Create a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Outcome: Those working in key sectors such as home care are less likely to experience in-work poverty.

Action: Continue to pay the living wage to all council employees.

Progress: MCC's Pay Policy for 2021/22 states MCC's commitment to the Living Wage. This will be going to Council for ratification on the 11th of March 2021.

Outcome: More people with disabilities are applying to work for the county council.

Action: Deliver the action plan to attain Disability Confident Committed status

Progress: After discussions with colleagues from DWP, we are confident that we have achieved Level 1 Committed and can begin work towards progressing to Level 2 Employer status. DWP have agreed to act as a critical friend in this process and to assist us in attaining level 2.

Outcome: People are able to access more services fully using the Welsh language.

Action: Proactively target new job opportunities at Welsh speakers.

Progress: There has been a recent review taken of the council recruitment process and the ability to speak Welsh is now included in the standard person specification section thus enabling those skills to be counted towards the scoring process for the shortlisting stage. Welsh language training will also be available for staff who are lacking confidence or need to enhance existing skills in order to increase the number of Welsh speakers that can provide a service to Welsh speaking members of the public.

The Equality and Welsh Language Officer is currently in the process of discussing with managers of front line services about arranging a pilot for 10 members of staff to take part in a fast track Welsh Language course thus further adding to the existing members of staff who speak Welsh.

Objective 6: Reduce the Gender pay gap in Monmouthshire County Council

Outcome: Understand Gender pay differences in our organisation.

Action: Gather and analyse gender data.

Progress: A statutory requirement of the Equality Act 2010 is to report annually on the Gender Pay Gap.

Outcome: Equal pay for work of equal value.

Action: Revise the People Strategy ensuring that data on the gender pay gap is utilised to inform the strategy.

Progress: The Single Status Agreement and Job Evaluation process ensures equal pay for equal value work. When the People Strategy is due for review, our gender pay gap data will be utilised to inform this.