



Strategic Equality Plan 2024 – 28



monmouthshire
sir fynwy

Version Control

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Our Foundation: Purpose and Values

Our Purpose

Monmouthshire will be a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

This purpose is at the heart of everything we do to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Monmouthshire.

Our Values

Values matter to us. They set out our expectations for ourselves, each other and the way we conduct business with organisations that we work with on your behalf.

Our values are:

Teamwork

Collaboration is at the heart of everything we do. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved. We will make the best of the ideas, and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

Openness

We are open and honest. People have the chance to be involved and tell us what matters.

Flexibility

We are flexible, enabling delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

Fairness

We provide opportunities for all people and communities to thrive. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently, recognising that we will sometimes need to take positive action to overcome some of the challenges faced by people with different protected characteristics.

Kindness

We will show kindness to all those we work with, putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.

Our Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28

Monmouthshire County Council's Community and Corporate Plan sets out the things we will be working on in the medium term. The Strategic Equality Plan is aligned to the direction set in this plan.

Our Objectives:

Monmouthshire will be:

- A Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced;
- A Green place to live and work, with reduced carbon emissions, and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency;
- A Thriving and ambitious place, where there are vibrant town centres, where businesses can grow and develop;
- A Safe place to live where people have a home and community where they feel secure;
- A Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued;
- A Learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential.

We shape our activity in the community and corporate plan in line with the goals and ambitions of our partners who are part of the Gwent Public Service Board (PSB). These include the Well Being Plan Objectives and the Marmot Principles.

Well-being Objectives:

- We want to create a fairer, more equitable and inclusive Gwent for all.
- We want a climate-ready Gwent, where our environment is valued and protected, benefitting our well-being now and for future generations.

Eight Marmot Principles:

- Give every child the best start in life.
- Enable all children, young people, and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives.
- Create fair employment and good work for all.
- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all.
- Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities.
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention.
- Tackle racism, discrimination, and their outcomes.
- Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together.

The Legal Context

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from unlawful discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It covers 9 protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex and Sexual orientation.

It also requires us to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between disabled people and people who are not disabled the need to take steps to take account of disabled persons' requirements.

It also created the Public Sector Equality Duty requiring public bodies to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010.
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from other people.
- encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Act also sets out a number of Specific Duties that public bodies are required to comply with:

- publish sufficient information to demonstrate its compliance with the general duty across its functions.
- prepare and publish Equality Objectives and detail the engagement that has been undertaken in developing them.
- publish a Strategic Equality Plan.
- set out how progress will be measured.

The Socio-economic Duty

The Socio-economic Duty seeks to improve the strategic decision-making of public bodies to better support those who are socio-economically disadvantaged in terms of income and/or status. It puts tackling inequality at the heart of decision-making and builds on the good work public bodies are already doing.

The duty refers to aspects of life 'socio' (your life chances and where you live) and 'economic' (how much money you have for essential and non-essential items).

Inequality can compound negative socio-economic factors. Our Strategic Equality Plan will set out objectives and actions which will help to improve socio-economic outcomes as well as focusing on group with protected characteristics.

National Policy Context

Since our last Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24, the Welsh Government has introduced further commitments that the plan will contribute to. These are the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, the LGBTQ+ Action Plan, the Action on Disability Plan and the Advancing Gender Equality Plan.

Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan

To achieve an anti-racist public sector in Wales, Welsh Government have identified a clear set of goals and actions that they will undertake to achieve anti-racism and it is their expectation for all public sector organisations to do the same. The different areas will aim to:

Demonstrate visible commitment to anti-racism:

- behaviour change and values.
- use of positive action.
- recruitment.
- progression.
- senior leadership.
- board representation.

Embed ways of working to tackle racism:

- use of all levers to tackle racism.
- use of data and evidence.
- policymaking.
- use of funding and grants.

Engage and deliver anti-racist services:

- cultural awareness and competency in our communications.
- language and interpretation services.
- advocacy services.

Embed accountability and demonstrate progress:

- governance and accountability arrangements.

LGBTQ+ Action Plan

The key actions for local authorities within the LGBTQ+ Action Plan are:

- involve LGBTQ+ communities in designing public service.
- homelessness services are inclusive of the specific needs of LGBTQ+ people.
- ensure Wales a Nation of Sanctuary remains inclusive of LGBTQ+ people.

- ensure that LGBTQ+ Welsh speakers have access to Welsh medium support services.
- provide equalities training that includes the needs of LGBTQ+ people to all public sector organisations.

Action on Disability Plan

In 2023 the Welsh Government set up The Disability Rights Taskforce, whose aims are to remove inequalities experienced by disabled people in society. They are developing solutions to challenge the structural, physical, and attitudinal barriers that disabled people face, which will form the new Disability Rights Action Plan for Wales, expected to be published in 2024.

Priority areas of work are:

- embedding and understanding of the Social Model of Disability (across Wales).
- access to services (including communications and technology).
- independent living: social care.
- independent living: health.
- travel.
- employment and income.
- affordable and accessible housing.
- children and young people.
- access to justice.
- wellbeing (as a workshop).

Advancing Gender Equality Plan

In March 2019 Welsh Government signed up to a vision and principles for gender equality in Wales: A gender equal Wales means an equal sharing of power, resources and influence for all women, men and non-binary people. This is a vision where the government aims to create the conditions for equality of outcome for all.

- all women can have economic independence and paid, and unpaid work is valued.
- diverse women are fairly represented in positions of influence and empowered to play a meaningful role in society.
- all women are free from discrimination and free to live their lives as they choose.
- violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence stops.
- existing power structures that disadvantage women are challenged.
- all women, men and non-binary people enjoy equal rights and protections and equality of outcome.

Evidence of Inequality

Monmouthshire is geographically large compared to many local authorities in Wales. It is semi-rural in nature, with just over half of the population living in urban areas. The county is often perceived as affluent. However, headline statistics can fail to shine a light on the diversity that exists within our borders.

There are many existing sources of evidence produced in recent years that have been used to inform the development of this plan:

- The Well-being Assessment produced by the Gwent Public Services Board as part of its responsibilities under the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
- Building a Fairer Gwent: improving health equity and the social determinants of Health – produced by the Institute of Health Equity.
- The Population Needs Assessment - produced under the Social Services and Well-being Act.
- Is Wales Fairer 2023 – a document prepared by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.
- The National Survey for Wales.

We've also examined a number of national action plans and strategies (as mentioned above) which look to advance the equalities agenda including:

- The Anti-Racist Wales Action Planⁱ
- LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Walesⁱⁱ
- Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Action Planⁱⁱⁱ
- Action on Disability action plan^{iv}

We understand that the issues highlighted in the above documents are symptoms of complex problems, often at a societal level. They cannot be solved by one organisation alone. Public, third and private sector must work together. Most importantly, we must work with and alongside communities to co-produce sustainable solutions.

We also recognise the importance of intersectionality. Many people possess more than one protected characteristic and systems of inequality based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other forms of discrimination intersect.

When you read this document you'll come across evidence that relates to multiple groups but is only shown in one section. We've done this to keep it as concise as possible, but we do recognise the overlapping issues and have taken them into account when proposing actions.

Strategic Equality Objectives

Monmouthshire County Council is committed to tackling inequality and working hard to decarbonise our county. We will work with and alongside our communities to achieve this^y.

It is vital that we value and make the most of the abilities and contributions of everyone in our communities, irrespective of age, sex, race, sexual orientation of any of the other characteristics that make us who we are.

These objectives and the actions outlined on the following pages are the things that we are committed to delivering over the next four years to ensure that everyone in our county is able to achieve their full potential.

- **Objective 1:** Give every child the best start in life.
- **Objective 2:** Support the creation of fair employment and good work for everyone.
- **Objective 3:** Work with partners and residents to build inclusive and cohesive communities.
- **Objective 4:** Expand our provision of community-based services that extend people's healthy life expectancy.
- **Objective 5:** Ensure our services are accessible to the public.
- **Objective 6:** Ensure we have a diverse workforce and a fully inclusive workplace.
- **Objective 7:** Reduce the gender pay gap.

For each objective we set out the actions we will take and the outcome we are seeking to achieve. Progress will be measured using a range of outcome and output measures. A full performance framework will be developed, and progress will be reported annually to the council's Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee in an annual monitoring report.

1. Give every child the best start in life

Why This Matters

The experiences we have in our childhoods have a huge impact on how we grow and develop, our physical and mental health, and our thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Research shows that it is associated with performance at school, future work outcomes and leads to higher income, better lifelong health and longer life expectancy.

Evidence

- Research shows that the first thousand days from pregnancy to age two offer a crucial window of opportunity to affect the future outcomes for children.
- Low birth weight is a predictor of a number of negative outcomes including lower life expectancy and educational attainment. Monmouthshire has the smallest percentage of low birthweight babies in Wales, 4.9% compared to a Wales average of 6.1%.
- There are issues with limited availability of early years providers across Gwent. Since 2020 Monmouthshire has lost 305 childcare spaces, 9% of its total.
- 27% of children in Monmouthshire live in poverty. This is the same as the UK average but below the Wales average of 34%.
- In Wales there are a range of disparities between the attainment of different ethnic groups at the foundation phase of primary education.
- Children who identify as neither a boy nor a girl are more likely to be bullied than those who identify as either a boy or a girl.
- Referrals to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) in Monmouthshire grew by 89% between 2020-21 and 2021-22. This is higher than the 39% rise across Wales. Wales also has the highest rate of any of the UK nations.
- Secondary school attendance has declined since the pandemic, we have also seen a rise in the number of exclusions from school.
- Children who are eligible for free school meals have lower levels of attainment than those who are not eligible.

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	
Disability	x	Sex	
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	x
Marriage or civil partnership		Welsh Language	x
Pregnancy or maternity		Poverty	x
Race	x		

Actions

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
Work with partners across the Gwent Public Services Board, including Public Health and the NHS to embed actions to reduce health inequalities in early years services.	Children, young people and families are supported to improve their health and well-being.	Strategic Partnerships Manager	March 2028
Increase the take up of free school meals focusing on those schools where the need is greatest.	No child goes hungry in school.	Chief Officer – Children and Young People	December 2024
Poverty proof our schools to reduce the cost of the school day, recognising that every pound matters to many families.	Children, young people and families are supported to improve their health and well-being.	Chief Officer – Children and Young People	March 2025
Ensure that every Monmouthshire school identifies a senior leader responsible for tackling poverty and raising the achievement of vulnerable learners.	Children, young people and vulnerable learners are supported to achieve their full potential.	Chief Officer – Children and Young People	December 2024
Develop a new Additional Learning Needs Strategy and related toolkits and	Vulnerable learners are supported to achieve their full potential.	Head of Inclusion	March 2025

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
resources, focusing on positive behavioural support.			
Continue taking a preventative approach to reducing school absences through the Emotionally Based School Avoidance programme for school leadership.	Children, young people and families are supported to achieve their full potential.	Head of Inclusion	Ongoing
Improve access to, and use of, data gathered by schools concerning bullying, harassment and discrimination, and provide support.	Better data to provide support for children and young people to feel safe in their school environment.	Head of Inclusion	December 2025
Provide an LGBTQ+ inclusive education through the Relationships and Sexuality Education section of the Curriculum for Wales.	Children, young people and vulnerable learners are inclusively supported.	Head of Inclusion	Ongoing
Work with others to increase childcare provision and quality in areas of higher deprivation with aim of reducing inequalities.	Children, young people and families are supported to improve their well-being.	Head of Inclusion	March 2026

2. Support the creation of fair employment and good work for everyone

Why This Matters

Most people spend a substantial part of their time at work and this is a significant part of their life. The job people do, and how valued they feel, is a powerful determinant of their quality of life. As well as the obvious financial effects, being unemployed can have long-lasting negative effects on health and wellbeing. It increases mortality and is a significant driver of inequalities in physical and mental health.

Evidence

- Between September 2022 and January 2023, 92% of people in Wales said their cost of living had increased in the past year.
- Disabled people are consistently much less likely to be employed than non-disabled people. The employment rate of disabled people in Monmouthshire fell from 60% in 2014 to 51% in 2023.
- Across Wales, disabled workers' median hourly earnings have stagnated while non-disabled workers' earnings have grown.
- Disabled people are more likely to be living in poverty and severe material deprivation. However, there has been a significant decrease in the proportion of disabled people living in severe material deprivation, from 40.5% in 2015/16 to 24.3% in 2019/20
- In Wales, ethnic minority workers are more likely to be in insecure employment (8.0%) than White British workers (14.2%). However, this gap in insecure employment has narrowed over time.
- Gay and lesbian adults are more likely to be employed (67%) than adults who identify as heterosexual (55%), bisexual (52%) or any other sexual orientation.
- The 2021 census found employment rates in Wales are higher among individuals whose gender identity was the same as their sex registered at birth (54.5%) than among those whose gender identity was different from their sex registered at birth.
- At 39% the proportion of women working part-time in Wales is far higher the proportion of men which is 12%.
- Women have been disproportionately affected by the raising of the state pension age meaning they will have to spend longer in the workforce without having had sufficient opportunity to plan their retirement.
- Rural communities can be more prone to poverty than urban areas with fuel poverty and access to services a particular problem.

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	x
Disability	x	Sex	x
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	x
Marriage or civil partnership	x	Welsh Language	x
Pregnancy or maternity	x	Poverty	x
Race	x		

Actions

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
Encourage local firms to become accredited disability confident employers.	Disabled people have better access to employment. More local firms with disability confidence status	Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	March 2028
Ensure our tender documentation encourages and promotes diversity amongst our suppliers and contractors.	Diversity is supported within the workplace	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	March 2025
Deliver employability programmes and build partnerships with employers and local businesses.	Diversity is supported within the workplace and with partners	Head of Economy, Employment and Skills	March 2026
Maintain a sustainable and accessible public bus network (including	Accessibility to town centres is maintained.	Head of Decarbonisation, Transport and Support Services	Ongoing

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
community transport) that serves our town centres.			
Offer networking, signposting and, where appropriate, grant funding opportunities to support diversification of rural businesses.	Diversity is supported within the workplace and with partners.	Head of Economy, Employment and Skills	March 2028
Provide support for the creation of 6,240 sustainable job opportunities.	More people have access to employment opportunities.	Head of Placemaking, Regeneration, Highways and Flooding	March 2028

3. Work with partners and residents to build inclusive and cohesive communities

Why This Matters

Community cohesion can be undermined if some groups have different experiences or outcomes to others. This is especially true when it's as a result of a group's protected characteristics. The issues that undermine cohesion can be deep-rooted. We want to create and maintain the conditions in which local communities can flourish.

Evidence

- 73% of people who identified as heterosexual or straight felt they belong to their local area, compared with 63% who did not identify as heterosexual or straight.
- 83% of men felt safe when: at home, walking, on public transport, and in their car all, compared with 58% of women.
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people have the worst outcomes of any ethnic group in Wales across a range of areas including education, health, employment, criminal justice and hate crime.
- In 2021/22, police forces in Wales recorded 6,295 hate crimes, an increase from 4,654 in 2020/21.
- The proportion of Monmouthshire residents identifying as from an Asian ethnic group is 1.3%, from a Black ethnic group was 0.2% from a mixed or multiple ethnic group was 1.2%; from a white group it was 96.7% with other groups making up 0.3%^{vi}.
- The proportion of disabled people reporting experiencing domestic abuse in the past 12 months is around three times greater than that reported by non-disabled people;
- Research indicates that childcare remains a particular and unchanging barrier to accessing English classes for speakers of other languages (ESOL), particularly for female asylum seekers and refugees in Wales.
- Between 2011 and 2021, the average (median) age of Monmouthshire's increased by four years, from 45 to 49 years of age.
- Monmouthshire's population aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 41% and, more significantly, those aged 85 and over by 96% by 2043.

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	x
Disability	x	Sex	x
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	x

Marriage or civil partnership	x	Welsh Language	x
Pregnancy or maternity	x	Poverty	x
Race	x		

Actions

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
Celebrate diversity and hold awareness raising events; including key dates in the calendar such as Black History Month and Ramadan	Increased awareness of diversity within the community	Equalities and Welsh Language Manager	Annually
Support and enable the creation of community groups to ensure everyone has a voice and can participate and help shape the future of our county.	Increased diversity in consultation	Equalities and Welsh Language Manager Chief Officer – Communities and Place	Ongoing
Become an age friendly county and seek accreditation from the World Health Organisation.	Older people are supported in maintaining their health and well-being. Accreditation from World Health Organisation	Partnerships Officer (Age Friendly Communities)	March 2025
Support the development a forum for disabled people.	Disabled people have a forum to inform policy making and service delivery.	Equalities and Welsh Language Manager Chief Officer – Communities and Place	March 2026
Work with partners to tackle violence against women and	Women feel safer within their environment.	Strategic Partnership Manager	Ongoing

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
girls and domestic and sexual violence.			
Ensure that we have a clear pathway for those with no recourse to public funds.	Assistance and advice is available to those with no recourse to public funds.	Strategic Partnership Manager	March 2026
Improve our use of data analysis and CCTV to prevent crimes and provide evidence to the police when they do take place.	People feel safer within their environments.	Strategic Partnership Manager	March 2025
Improve housing support for refugees and asylum seekers and other marginalised groups.	Marginalised communities receive housing support.	Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	March 2025
Become an accredited county of sanctuary and a place of sanctuary for LGBTQ+ migrants.	Monmouthshire is an accredited county of sanctuary.	Strategic Partnership Manager	June 2024
Address period poverty and promote period dignity.	People have access to affordable period products.	Community Wellbeing Development Lead	ongoing

4. Expand our provision of community-based services that extend people’s healthy life expectancy

Why This Matters

Health inequalities often result from social inequalities. There are huge differences in healthy life expectancy between people living in different communities and clear socio-economic inequalities in behaviours such as eating, exercising and drinking. Alongside this, rising fuel and housing costs are further reducing the available funds for a healthy diet.

Evidence

- Healthy life expectancy for males is 69.8 years, which is the highest in Wales, and 70.7 years for females.
- Those living in the least deprived areas of Monmouthshire expected to live longer than those in the most deprived, by on average 6.3 years for males and 3.6 years for females. Similarly, those in the least deprived parts of Monmouthshire are likely to live in good health for longer, by an average of 10.1 years for males and 11.1 years for females.
- Families with the lowest 10% of household income would have to spend nearly three-quarters of their entire income (after housing costs) to afford the recommended healthy NHS Eatwell plate.
- In 2021/22, 42% of adults with a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity participated in at least one sport or physical activity compared with 68% who did not have a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity.

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	x
Disability	x	Sex	x
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	x
Marriage or civil partnership	x	Welsh Language	
Pregnancy or maternity	x	Poverty	x
Race	x		

Actions

Action	Outcome/Measurable	Responsibility	Timescale
Ensure new walking and cycling infrastructure reaches areas with the lowest rates of physical activity.	People are supported in their physical activity.	Active Travel, Communications and Engagement Manager	March 2027
Continue to provide a broad range of opportunities for people to be healthy and active including the National Exercise Referral Scheme.	People are supported in their physical activity.	Chief Officer – Customer, Culture and Wellbeing	Ongoing
Support community groups in raising awareness of health inequalities and access to information in the most deprived areas.	A reduction in health inequalities through access to information	Chief Officer – Customer, Culture and Wellbeing Equalities and Welsh Language Manager	Ongoing
Support community groups to tackle isolation and loneliness with a focus on rural communities.	A reduction in the effects of isolation and loneliness	Chief Officer – Communities and Place Equalities and Welsh Language Manager	Ongoing

5. Ensure our services are accessible to the public

Why This Matters

Public services play a vital role in the lives of tens of thousands of people very day. Many people face barriers accessing the things they need. This can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets, they can be caused by how we present information so not everyone can process it, or it may be people's attitudes to difference.

Evidence

- Only 24% of those aged over 70 are likely to use digital technology to support their health compared to 87% of people aged 16–19.
- Public and private return travel times to services such as doctors' surgeries, libraries or leisure centres in Monmouthshire are higher than the Wales average in every category except one^{vii}.
- 7.3% of Monmouthshire residents were identified as being disabled and limited a lot^{viii}.
- Young Carers are more likely than others of their age to live in deprived areas and experience disruption to their education^{ix}.

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	
Disability	x	Sex	
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	
Marriage or civil partnership		Welsh Language	x
Pregnancy or maternity		Poverty	x
Race	x		

Actions

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
Continue to ensure our public buildings are fully accessible to all service users.	Buildings are fully accessible to all people.	Head of Estates	Ongoing

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
Work with partners to ensure the provision of accessible toilets in our town centres.	Town centre toilets are accessible to all people.	Head of Estates	March 2028
Ensure that all communications are accessible, including recognising the needs of neurodiverse people.	All people can access communications.	Active Travel, Communications and Engagement Manager	ongoing
Ensure we use the social model of disability when developing new services and reconfiguring existing ones.	Barriers for disabled people are removed. Social Model of Disability is embedded across the organisation	Equality and Welsh Language Manager Head of Social Care, Safeguarding and Health	March 2025
Promote courses to raise digital skills and literacy amongst all groups through community education courses and our community hubs.	Accessibility is improved through digital skills.	Head of Digital Design and Innovation	March 2028
Increase the number of Welsh speakers employed by the council to improve access.	Welsh speakers can fully access services in their own language.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	March 2028
Promote the active offer of language choice in social care.	People can access services in their language of choice.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	March 2025

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
Ensure that training on equalities is available to all staff and councillors to improve inclusive decision-making.	Inclusive decision making is improved.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	March 2025
Review Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process	The Integrated Impact Assessment process is fit for purpose and embedded.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	December 2024

6. Ensure we have a diverse workforce and a fully inclusive workplace

Why This Matters

When employees trust that they will be treated regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation or age, they are more likely to be happy and productive in their roles. Having an inclusive and accessible workplace helps attract a diverse pool of talent and ensures the organisation can retain the diverse talent we already have.

Evidence

- 73% of the council employees are female.
- 2% of the workforce have indicated that they have a disability.

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	x
Disability	x	Sex	x
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	x
Marriage or civil partnership		Welsh Language	x
Pregnancy or maternity		Poverty	
Race	x		

Actions

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
Ensure that we attain disability confident level 2 status within the first year of this plan and then work towards levels 3.	Disability Confident Level 2 is attained.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	June 2024
Put in place measures to support	Neurodiverse colleagues are supported within the workplace.	Equality and Welsh	Ongoing

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
and accommodate the needs of neurodiverse colleagues.		Language Manager	
Actively target recruitment opportunities towards groups who are under-represented in our workforce.	Under-represented groups have more representation with the workforce.	Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	March 2025
Address the data gaps that exist across all protected characteristics (particularly ethnicity and disability) and disaggregate data by across policy areas.	Data gaps are reduced to better inform decision making.	Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	March 2025
Provide access to inclusion training for all staff to ensure awareness of inclusivity and diversity within the workplace	Diversity within the workforce is celebrated.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	December 2024
Develop staff networks to raise awareness of under-represented groups within the workforce	Staff networks developed.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	March 2025

7. Reduce the gender pay gap

Why This Matters

The gender pay gap has wide implications for society. It affects women's pension contributions and results in a higher incidence of poverty and social exclusion in later life.

Evidence

- 89.1% of single-parent households in Wales are headed by women and are the most likely to be living in poverty.^x
- The proportion of women working part-time in Wales remains far higher (39.0% in 2022) than the proportion of men (12.1%).
- The pay gap between men and women persists, as women are on average paid 14.1% less than men in Wales. However, this gap has narrowed slightly between 2010 and 2019.
- Average female weekly pay in the county of Monmouthshire is £559 compared to £633 for males.
- Research by the Equality and Human Rights Commission highlighted that childcare needs and caring responsibilities continue to be a significant barrier to gender equality in employment and education.

This is related to:

Age		Religion or belief	
Disability		Sex	x
Gender reassignment		Sexual orientation	
Marriage or civil partnership		Welsh Language	
Pregnancy or maternity	x	Poverty	x
Race			

Actions

Action	Outcome/Measurable	Responsibility	Timescale
Ensure that career pathways do not limit the ability of part-time staff to progress into senior roles.	Part time staff are not limited in progressing into senior roles.	Head of HR	March 2028
Continue to operate a transparent job evaluation scheme to ensure equitable pay rates.	Equitable pay rates are ensured.	Head of HR	Ongoing
Publish information on the gender pay gap annually, evaluate the reasons for the difference in pay and explore appropriate actions to address them.	Annual publication of gender pay gap information and actions to address this are explored.	Head of HR	Annually

Appendix 1: Consultation

The evidence, proposed objectives and actions have been subject to a four-week consultation period that took place between January and February 2024. As well as a website survey, the consultation was sent to local groups with members possessing protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010.

The level of responses was relatively low, those who did respond were largely supportive of the objectives and actions proposed. There were some views expressed that articulated clear views on gender identity.

We also drew on evidence from other consultations including work done to develop a well-being assessment for the Gwent Public Services Board and the development of an age friendly Monmouthshire. There was a high response level to the consultation on the latter subject. Key issues emerging included: access to public transport, parking in town centres, accessible facilities, better housing for the needs of older people, access to and understanding of digital technology and the discrepancy in health care, depending on where you live.

The draft strategic equality plan benefitted from consideration by the council's People Scrutiny Committee which has helped shape the final version. Feedback included the need to ensure the plan fully reflected the socio-economic challenges faced by rural communities and the challenges faced by women affected by increases changes in the state pension age, often referred to as the WASPI group. Views were also stressed about the importance of differentiating between sex and gender.

These have used to inform the final plan. The plan may continue to evolve as further work is done with community groups to understand the issues they face.

Appendix 2: References

- i <https://www.gov.wales/anti-racist-wales-action-plan>
- ii <https://www.gov.wales/lgbtq-action-plan-wales>
- iii <https://www.gov.wales/advancing-gender-equality-action-plan>
- iv <https://www.gov.wales/action-disability-right-independent-living-framework-and-action-plan>
- v Monmouthshire County Council, Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28.
- vi Office for National Statistics, Census 2021, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/W06000021/>
- vii Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/welsh-indexmultiple-deprivation/?lang=en>
- viii Office for National Statistics, Census 2021, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/W06000021/>
- ix Equality and Human Rights Monitor 2023: Is Wales Fairer? (ibid)
- x Equality and Human Rights Monitor 2023: Is Wales Fairer? <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/our-work/equality-and-human-rights-monitor/equality-and-human-rights-monitor-2023-wales-fairer>