

SUBJECT: STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 25-26

MEETING: PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 18 JUNE 2026

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide the committee with an opportunity to examine progress against the commitments made in the Strategic Equality Plan 24-28 during the period March 2025 to March 2026.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That members use the report to scrutinise delivery of the commitments made in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan.

2. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 Tackling inequality is one of the Council's biggest priorities. If we are to achieve our ambition, it is important that we value and make the most of the abilities and contributions of everyone in our communities, irrespective of age, gender, race, sexual orientation or any of the other characteristics that make us who we are.
- 3.2 The Equality Act 2010 was introduced in April 2011. Within its specific duties is the requirement to publish an annual report on the council's performance against the commitments made in its Strategic Equality Plan.
- 3.3 The Council approved the Strategic Equality Plan and objectives in March 2024, covering the period April 2024 to March 2028. This is the first progress report against those objectives and covers the period from April 2025 to March 2026.
- 3.4 The objectives are:
- 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

- 3.5 The full monitoring report is included as an appendix. Overall, good progress has been made. Some highlights are:
- The development of our Inclusion Strategy, Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Policy and resources is complete. The local authority Estyn inspection report (January 2026) highlighted that we have a clear strategic vision for inclusion and improved the provision for pupils with ALN.
 - We continue to deliver a variety of employability programmes. We are currently delivering (and have been since April 2025) Future Focus 10-week employability programme to the 18-24 cohort in partnership with the DWP. Since inception, the programme has supported approximately 60 18-24 year olds with 27 achieving employment. A number of this cohort are neurodivergent.
 - We have held several events throughout the year: These included an Interfaith Event at County Hall where faith leaders from the Muslim, Christian, Bahá'í, Buddhist, and other faiths helped attendees gain a deeper understanding of different faith communities. In addition, by opening up access to the local authority we are improving access to and engagement with local democracy. We hosted Wales' National Armed Forces Day event at Caldicot Castle which drew thousands as the community showed its appreciation, including serving personnel, veterans, reservists, cadets, and their families.
 - We have focused on supporting communities and partners to bring about social change and improve quality of life across Monmouthshire. We have:
 - Supported over 170 community organisations during the year, helping to strengthen local activity and resilience
 - Engaged over 1,200 people through events and activities across the county
 - Enabled 260 volunteering opportunities and supported over 70 community activities
 - Delivered training and support that reached around 500 people and 120+ organisations through the Be Community programme alone
 - We launched Let's Talk Monmouthshire in January 2025. This provides residents with a single place to visit for all consultations and digital engagement opportunities across the organisation to improve resident engagement. Since Let's Talk Monmouthshire launched, we have seen over 47,000 visits and 14,165 contributions, giving our residents the chance to positively influence projects and policies across the organisation.
 - We provided face-to-face training on the Social Model of Disability, delivered by the Disabled People's Employment Champion at DWP, to all HR and Workforce Development colleagues. This training is also available online to all colleagues. Regular sessions are advertised in our training newsletter.
- 3.6 Tackling inequality runs through everything we do as a council. All policy decisions taken are accompanied by an integrated impact assessment which highlights the potential impact on groups with protected characteristics and encourages those developing proposals to identify how they could be improved to have a more positive impact.

4 EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 4.1 The actions within the Monitoring Report are presented in a way that enables the reader to understand the impacts of actions taken within the year to March 26. The Strategic Equality Plan is by its very nature a plan that is looking to address, mitigate and positively address identified issues in Monmouthshire that have an adverse impact upon people or groups of people with protected characteristics.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 5.1 We are required to publish the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report.

6 EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 The annual monitoring report is the way in which the committee is able to evaluate progress against the delivery of the objectives approved by Council in the Strategic Equality Plan

7 REASONS:

- 7.1 To ensure that the authority is able to comply with the legislative requirements of the Equalities Act to produce an annual monitoring report and to ensure that we can be held to account for the delivery of the commitments made in the strategy.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 There are no resource implications associated with the production of the monitoring report.

9 CONSULTEES:

The production of the annual monitoring report has been informed by dialogue with a wide-range of people, groups and organisations who have contributed to this work over the past twelve months.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28

11 AUTHOR:

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