

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

Annual Report Year 4: 2023-24

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd



Foreword

Welcome to the fourth annual report about our progress to deliver our Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24. This is the final update report for this plan; we now have a new [Inclusive Conwy Plan 2024-28](#) that was published earlier this year.

Over the past 12 months, we've been reflecting on our approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and how we strengthen our goal to create a community where no matter your background you are able to live, work and visit a county where everyone is welcomed. We've launched new learning opportunities for staff (with more to come), we've become members of Inclusive Employers and I've been chairing our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group, which provides an important space to make sure that staff's lived experiences are at the heart of our work to create an inclusive workplace. We know change doesn't happen overnight, but we're committed to listening, learning, and evolving to meet the needs of our diverse communities.

While this report highlights work undertaken this year, we recognise there is much more to be done. This report serves as both a reflection of our progress and a roadmap for the future. Conwy is a diverse county, and we must continue to do more to make sure everyone feels a sense of empathy, acceptance and belonging – be that working in Conwy, visiting our county or living here.

Rhun ap Gareth, Chief Executive
October 2024

Executive Summary

Welcome to the fourth annual report on actions taken to deliver our Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24. This is the final report against this plan, which has been succeeded by the [Inclusive Conwy Plan 2024-28](#) (published March 2024). The report provides an overview of our work this year to create a community where no matter your background you are able to live, work and visit a county where you are welcomed and feel acceptance and belonging.

In the fourth year of the 2020-24 plan, there were fewer actions identified in the action plan than in previous years (only 3 actions with a specific end date within 2023-24, not including ongoing actions). However, there was still a significant amount of work undertaken. Some of the highlights from our work this year include:

- We developed our Inclusive Conwy Plan for 2024-28. Development of the plan prompted a reflection on our approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and resulted in development of the person-centred approach we want to take moving forwards. For more information, please see our [Inclusive Conwy Plan 2024-2028 - Summary](#)
- During the year we expanded our training offer to staff. Following introductory anti-racism sessions for senior managers in January 2024, we commenced a wider rollout of introductory race awareness sessions in April. We also introduced in-person Introduction to Inclusive Conwy training, as well as a new Diversity and Inclusion e-learning module via the Coaching Culture platform
- Our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group started to meet in January 2024 - this is the first step in looking at different ways to make sure that staff's lived experiences are at the heart of creating an inclusive workplace culture
- We've become members of Inclusive Employers. This gives us access to a wide range of resources, webinars and good practice that we can learn from and adopt as we continue to create an inclusive organisational culture
- We are proud to be the first county in Wales where all secondary schools participate in the KIVA anti-bullying programme
- We hosted the DARPL National Leadership Conference in Venue Cymru in June 2024 – which included [Ysgol Aberconwy students sharing their sense of Cynefin \(belonging\) to educational leaders from across Wales and beyond](#)

- Conwy Museums' Service launched 'Out and About' - an LGBTQ+ Series that takes place at library spaces throughout the county. The series hosts events or workshops once a month exploring themes around LGBTQ+ History
- Re-Imagining Congo House/African Institute: The Museum Service worked with people from North Wales and Central Africa to tell the story of the African Institute in Colwyn Bay. The exhibition uses art, animation, and artefacts to explore different perspectives on this important part of Black History in Wales
- Staff in Social Care led a Dementia Listening Campaign in Llanfairfechan - this engagement work started in 2023 and will contribute to the ongoing work of Public Health Wales to improve dementia care and encourage the development of dementia-friendly communities across Wales
- We worked in partnership with Denbighshire and North Wales Together to launch a new employment pathway for individuals with a learning disability who are open to social services. The supported employment pathway offers people intensive job coach support in order to help them find paid employment
- In Social Care we've recruited a Conwy and Denbighshire Autism Lead Officer who has been carrying out a range of activities including: developing and coordinating the Autistic Spectrum Condition Code of Practice implementation plans, improving publicly-available information around autism, and developing autism-specific projects and activities in the local area
- Conwy Youth Service became a Rainbow Flag Award holder - highlighting a commitment to improve the lives of all the young people they work with, as well as the LGBTQ+ young people in their care, those from LGBTQ+ families and LGBTQ+ staff members
- Our Leisure Services offer a range of programmes that give residents and visitors access to health and wellbeing opportunities. There has been an increase in members and attendances this year and a new inclusion model for activities is being developed which will be launched in September 2024

Looking Forward

As we move forwards we are keen to ensure that the focus remains on people and their lived experiences, rather than just our obligation to comply with legislation. While this report highlights examples of good practice from across the organisation, we know we have a lot of work to do to make sure our workplaces and services are fair and inclusive for everyone. Some of the areas we have identified include:

Inclusive Conwy: We are aiming to embed a culture of awareness and individual responsibility amongst staff that no matter your background or experiences, we all have a collective responsibility to promote equality, diversity and inclusion. We want all staff to understand ‘it doesn’t have to happen to you, to matter to you’ when it comes to creating an inclusive Conwy. We have made a start on this with some of the training we have introduced, but there is much more to do – including carrying out a baseline review of our EDI approach and reviewing many of our policies, practices and systems to make sure they are fair for everyone.

Increased Capacity: To support our approach, and to help deliver on the above, we are increasing our capacity to deliver on our equality, diversity and inclusion aims with an additional post, which we are aiming to appoint to in 2024.

Lived Experience: It is crucial that listening to people’s lived experiences and acting on what we learn is at the centre of all we do. We will be looking at our approach to staff engagement, to ensure that staff voices are at the heart of creating an inclusive culture in our workplaces. We know that we will need to work closely with others to deliver positive and meaningful changes, so we want to develop stronger links with local communities and organisations.

Celebrating Diversity: One of our priorities is to do more to recognise and celebrate diversity across North Wales in our communications and events. Be that raising awareness of local culture and history through initiatives like the Re-Imagining Congo House/African Institute exhibition, developing a Diversity and Inclusion calendar to share information about a range of awareness days, weeks and months, and/or hosting events in collaboration with local communities that celebrate North Wales’ diverse past, present and future.

Continued training review: We are looking to develop a ‘tiered’ approach to equality, diversity and inclusion training, within the resources we have available and by seeking out additional sources of funding and support. We have started to introduce some introductory sessions, which we will look to build on through further learning opportunities. There is also a responsibility for staff to educate themselves, which we will support by

publishing a resource library that will provide a variety of resources to support self-directed learning in a range of learning styles.

Financial Pressures: During 2023-24 there were once again significant budgetary pressures throughout Local Government that force us to make difficult decisions about service delivery, and these pressures look set to continue. Despite the issues these pressures bring in terms of capacity and resources, our staff continue to work hard to ensure we deliver important and inclusive services for all of our residents.

1. Background

We recognise that what we do every day within Conwy plays an important part in people's lives and we have a key role in enhancing the quality of life for everyone across our communities. This report highlights some of the actions we've taken this year as part of our commitment to being an inclusive employer and service provider (which is outlined in more detail in our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)).

Alongside our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, the Equality Act 2010 requires us to have due regard to:

- advancing equality of opportunity;
- eliminating unlawful discrimination;
- and fostering good relations

Our work is also underpinned by the Statutory Duties (Wales) Regulations 2011 (often referred to as Specific Duties), which require us to report on the following areas in relation to the Equality Act:

- 1.1 The steps we have taken to identify, collect and use **Relevant Information**, and the effectiveness of these arrangements
- 1.2 **Progress towards fulfilling each equality objective**, including a statement on the effectiveness of the steps taken
- 1.3 **Specified employment information**, including information on staff, recruitment, training and pay

2. Relevant Information

We used a range of equality-related evidence when setting the equality objectives in our Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24. We also use relevant data when carrying out Equality Impact Assessments on new and revised policies and practices. Some of this data is linked to national statistics for Wales and the UK, but wherever possible, we try to use local and regional data more relevant to us in Conwy and North Wales.

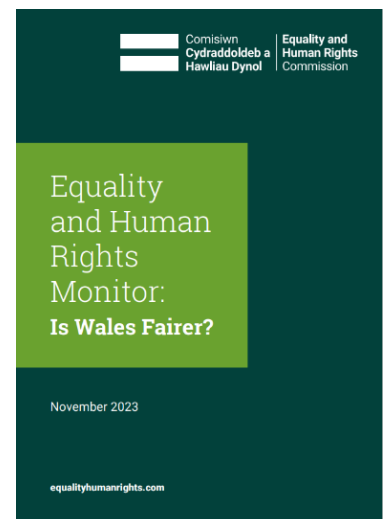
Information shared via engagement and consultation is crucial when implementing specific actions. For example, the [Empowering Diverse Communities into Employment engagement](#) we carried out in summer 2023 is informing our ongoing work to make sure our recruitment processes are inclusive and fair. It is vital that listening to people's lived experiences and acting on what we learn is central to all that we do.

Some of the latest information sources informing our work include:

Equality and Human Rights Monitor 2023: Is Wales Fairer?

In November 2023, the Equality Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published an updated version of their '[Is Wales Fairer?](#)' report, which highlighted many persistent inequalities against the background of the impact of the pandemic, the UK's departure from the European Union, as well as the economic impact of periods of high inflation.

Some areas of progress across Wales were highlighted, including: greater diversity in public appointments, a narrowing of the gender pay gap and a narrowing of the employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people. The report was presented under the nine protected characteristic headings (as opposed to themes that were used in previous versions). It includes key findings and recommendations against each protected characteristic, as well as developments that impacted multiple groups. Alongside the main report, the EHRC also published '[factsheets by domain](#)', which highlight key facts and statistics from the report against six areas of life: education, work, living standards, health, justice and personal security, and



participation. Findings and recommendations from the report were incorporated into the development of our Inclusive Conwy Plan 2024-28.

Equality in North Wales:
Data and evidence
report



North Wales
Public Sector
Equality Network



Equality in North Wales: Data and Evidence Report

To support the development of the Inclusive Conwy Plan, this report was commissioned by the North Wales Public Services Board Officers Network in 2023 as an update to the 2019 edition of the report. The report aims to gain a deeper understanding of equality data at a local level across North Wales, with a primary focus on themes identified in the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s ‘Is Wales Fairer?’ 2018 report. The Equality in North Wales report compares the latest data

available with data included in the 2019 report to review progress and include any new sources of data as applicable. A link to the full report has been published as an appendix to our [Inclusive Conwy Plan 2024-28](#).

Anti-racist Wales Action Plan

Following consultation on a draft Race Equality Action Plan, Welsh Government published the [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan](#) in 2022 - which sets out a vision to make Wales an anti-racist nation by 2030. The plan outlines actions for Welsh Government and the public sector (including local authorities) in a range of areas, including:

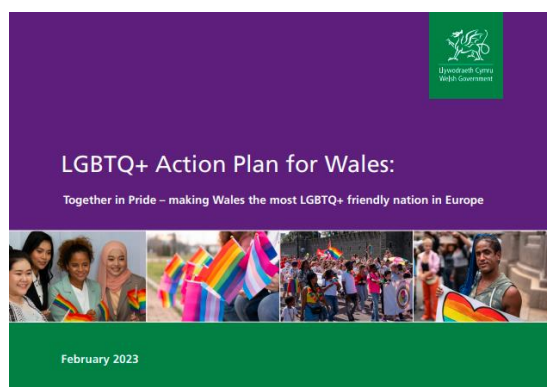


- Leadership within Welsh Government and across public services
- Education and Welsh Language
- Culture, Heritage and Sport, Health
- Social Care
- Homes and Places
- Local Government
- Employability and Skills (including Social Partnership and Fair Work and Entrepreneurship)
- Support for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

- Crime and Justice
- Childcare and Play

To support the delivery of the plan, Welsh Government have been running a series of webinars on specific topics/areas. Some of the recordings of these webinars have been made available here: [Anti-racist Wales webinars](#). Welsh Government are currently reviewing the plan, with a view to publishing a second iteration that reflects feedback they have received so far, and we are anticipating this later in 2024. We

As part of developing our Inclusive Conwy Plan 2024-28, we have published Conwy-specific anti-racism and LGBTQ+ Action Plans - based on actions from the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales (see below). As we continue to build capacity and progress this work, we will work with staff, residents and local organisations to ensure that the actions we have identified from the all-Wales plans are applicable and effective in a North Wales context.



LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales

Welsh Government published an [LGBTQ+ Action Plan](#) in 2023, with the aim of making Wales the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe, supporting all LGBTQ+ people in Wales to live their fullest life: to be healthy, to be happy, and to feel safe. The plan provides a framework for LGBTQ+ policy

development across government and with partners, setting out an overarching vision to improve the lives of, and outcomes for, LGBTQ+ people. It includes a range of policy-specific actions relating to human rights, education, improving safety, housing, health and social care, sport, culture, and promoting community cohesion. It sets out the steps necessary to strengthen equality for LGBTQ+ people, to challenge discrimination, and to create a society where LGBTQ+ people are safe to live and love authentically, openly and freely as themselves.

Previously Referenced Sources of Information

Sources of information referenced in previous annual reports include:

- [Is Wales Fairer? 2018](#) (EHRC)

- [How Coronavirus has affected equality and human rights](#) (EHRC)
- [The Socio-economic Duty](#) (Welsh Government)
- [Locked Out: Liberating disabled people's lives and rights in Wales beyond COVID-19](#) (Welsh Government)
- [Equality Impact Assessments: More than a tick box exercise?](#) (Audit Wales)
- [Strategic Plan 2022-2025](#) (EHRC)
- [Age Friendly Wales: Our Strategy for an Ageing Society](#) (Welsh Government)

Other Sources of Information

We have previously published [Equality Statistics - Research Bulletins](#) that provide an overview of the diversity data of the Conwy population. The latest of these was published in 2022 and we plan to update these bulletins with the latest data (including Census 2021 data) as capacity allows.

Other sources of equalities data include:

- [Understanding equalities dashboard - Data Cymru](#)
- [Equality and diversity statistics \(northwalescollaborative.wales\)](#)
- [The Census \(northwalescollaborative.wales\)](#)
- [Census 2021 population data for equality characteristics by age, sex and local authority | GOV.WALES](#)

Census Data

Interactive maps of the latest Census data are available here: [Census Maps](#). These maps provide an overview of various areas (e.g. Local Authority, Wards) in terms of topics such as:

- Population: People, their living arrangements and where they come from
- Identity: How people identify themselves and their beliefs
- Health: People's general health and caring responsibilities
- Education: People in education and qualifications they hold
- Housing: Types of homes and the people living in them
- Work: All about people's jobs and employment

We use data about the population of Conwy to compare against the equality monitoring data we collect (for people using our services as well as our workforce). Detailed Census data can be found in Appendix 1: People of Conwy.

Complaints Linked to Equalities

Our Corporate Complaints Service monitors the number of compliments and complaints received. During 2023-24, there were 246 compliments (from external bodies or members of the public), fewer than the previous year. 363 complaints were received, an increase of 17 complaints on the previous year (a trend which is in line with the Ombudsman Complaints Standards Authority Data for 2023-24). 36 complaints were referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and 35 were closed (3 carried over from the previous year). Of these, 29 complaints did not merit investigation, 5 complaints were premature (a complaint is categorised as premature if the complaint has not first made a complaint to Conwy, as the service provider, or if a response period for a formal complaint has not yet elapsed), 1 complaints received an early resolution and 1 complaint was withdrawn. There were no equalities related complaints recorded during this period.

3. Progress towards fulfilling each Equality Objective

Our equality objectives for 2020-24 are as follows:

- Objective 1: Outcomes in Education attainment and Wellbeing in Schools are Improved
- Objective 2: We will take action to ensure we are an equal opportunities employer and reduce pay gaps
- Objective 3: We will take action to improve the Living Standards of people disadvantaged by their protected characteristics
- Objective 4: We will improve Health, Wellbeing and Social Care outcomes
- Objective 5: We will improve Personal Security and Access to Justice
- Objective 6: Increase Access to Participation and improve diversity of decision making
- Objective 7: Develop our knowledge and understanding of the socio-economic duty

Each equality objective has a number of priority action areas and our action plan sets out specific activities that are intended to help achieve these objectives and priorities.

In the remainder of this section we have provided details of progress made during Year 4 of our action plan and other relevant work that has been underway during the year which has contributed to improving the lives of people with different protected characteristics living and working in Conwy.

Deferred Actions: As part of developing the Inclusive Conwy Plan 2024-28 we reviewed deferred actions and, incorporated them into the action plan as capacity and funding allowed, taking into account increasing workloads and budgetary pressures.

Objective 1: Outcomes in Education Attainment and Wellbeing in Schools are improved

Priority Areas:

- 1.1 Address attainment gaps for children and young people to maximise their potential
- 1.2 Reduce high exclusion rates for disabled and ethnic minority children
- 1.3 Collate bullying data by protected characteristic to enable each school to identify relevant objective(s)
- 1.4 Tackle gender segregation by improving representation of girls and women on STEM courses (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) and expanding range of subject choice
- 1.5 Address mental health for pupils in schools

Updates:

1.1.5 Progress on figures for pupils who are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

We have seen an increase in the number of learners aged 16-18 transitioning from formal education to further education, employment or training. As of June 2024, the percentage of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training was 6.1% (the target set by Welsh Government is for Conwy to have a figure below 8%).

Due to funding through the Shared Prosperity Fund, we have been able to extend our [TRAC](#) offer and appoint a Skills and Development Officer to develop and deliver accreditation to young people in an environment that is more suitable to them than a formal classroom. As a result, we are also able to source and monitor work experience placements for young people wishing to gain some workplace learning while also completing an accreditation.

We have placed a strong focus on working with a range of partners including Careers Wales and a range of services/projects across the

authority (including Family Centres, Communities for Work and Children Looked After). We also work with Grwp Llandrillo Menai, offering additional engagement and support when young people have been unable to start or sustain their course.

1.4.2 Take pART (Venue Cymru)

Take pART (Venue Cymru's annual arts, literature and science event) returned in-person in January 2024, with over 200 workshops and events. Over 9,000 people attended over the weekend, with a series of sessions aimed at giving everyone the chance to access and experience a variety of activities that promote participation in arts, literature and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). For a flavour of some of the events that took place over the weekend, please see the [Take pART 2024](#) page on the Venue Cymru website.

1.5 Improve Mental Health for pupils in Schools

A cornerstone of driving change within schools in Conwy is supporting the embedding of the Welsh Government's [Whole School Approach \(WSA\) to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing](#). All secondary schools in Conwy have successfully met their targets for embedding the framework. Over the next 12 months, our focus will shift towards primary schools to ensure comprehensive implementation across all educational stages.

We receive funding from Welsh Government to support the implementation of the Whole School Approach. This funding is primarily used to maintain and extend the provision of the [school counselling service](#). We allocate a proportion of this grant to fund school-based interventions such as ELSA ([Emotional Literacy Support Assistant](#)), [Seasons for Growth](#), and [KIVA anti-bullying programme](#). This year, 42 Conwy schools have been supported through the ELSA programme, which enhances pupils' emotional literacy. To assist schools in supporting pupils dealing with loss and grief, we have supported 35 schools through the Seasons for Growth programme – with 44 schools now part of this initiative.

We are particularly proud to be the first county in Wales where all secondary schools participate in the KIVA anti-bullying programme. This year, we invested in further embedding KIVA across both secondary and primary schools, with Pupil Referral Units also investing significantly in these interventions through WSA funding. We are extremely proud of the

work our schools are doing in implementing these programmes and fostering a culture that encourages pupils to talk about their feelings. This effort is underpinned by the Trauma Informed Schools initiative, supported by [GwE](#).

To strengthen this support, we collaborate closely with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) In-Reach service, which provides early intervention support and resources such as Reading Well books. We also offer staff training programmes; including Mental Health First Aid training (completed by 27 teachers this academic year) and Five Ways to Wellbeing training.

All secondary schools in Conwy participated in the 2023-24 School Health Research Network (SHRN) survey. Each school received its own report, and the local authority's data will be published on the [SHRN Data Dashboard](#) in September 2024. To monitor the wellbeing of primary pupils, schools are offered the opportunity to take part in the Primary Wellbeing Survey, administered by our own team. We regularly analyse the data from these surveys and encourage schools to use the findings to inform their school improvement plans and identify key areas to address within their curriculum.

Pupil health and wellbeing are not just the responsibility of the school, but of the entire community of organisations and departments that support our schools. Unfortunately, the recent economic climate has placed significant strain on resources both within our schools and on the supporting agencies. We must recognise that the financial climate is negatively impacting many services and ultimately the pupils who rely on them, and with the implementation phase of the WSA coming to an end this financial year we are concerned about the impact this could have on the grant we receive for this work. While we are proud of the excellent work happening within our schools, we are concerned about the long-term impact of the financial climate on the mental health of both the workforce and pupils in our schools.

Other actions and outcomes under the Education Objective:

- We hosted the Diversity and Anti-Racist Professional Learning (DARPL) National Leadership Conference in Venue Cymru in June 2024 – which included [a group of Ysgol Aberconwy students](#)

[sharing their sense of Cynefin \(belonging\) to educational leaders from across Wales and beyond](#)

- Members of our Early Years Team & Family Information Service attended [DARPL](#) training in January 2024. Childcare umbrella organisations (e.g. Mudiad Meithrin, Pacey Cymru, Early Years Wales, Clybiau Plant Cymru, National Day Nurseries Association) are currently arranging anti-racism awareness sessions for childcare setting employees across Conwy
- Conwy Youth Service became a Rainbow Flag Award holder - highlighting a commitment to improve the lives of all the young people they work with, as well as the LGBTQ+ young people in their care, those from LGBTQ+ families and LGBTQ+ staff members
- We supported Denbighshire, who lead the local [English as an Additional Language](#) service, to recruitment a new lead for the service. We continue to work closely with the Denbighshire team with regards to support and provision for learners and schools in Conwy
- Universal Primary Free School Meals was fully rolled out to all primary aged learners from September 2023. There is ongoing promotion of the free school meal offer and the average number of Primary School meals served per day in May 2024 was 5,300. This provision helps to deliver a range of benefits, including: helping families with cost of living pressures, promoting healthy eating and improving social skills, behaviour and attainment

Objective 2: We will take action to ensure we are an equal opportunities employer and reduce pay gaps

Priority Areas:

- 2.1 Address gender, ethnicity and disability pay differences
- 2.2 Review our flexible working practices to ensure equal opportunities at all levels
- 2.3 Ensure effective policies to prevent and respond to sexual harassment
- 2.4 Review Pregnancy and Maternity Provision in the Workplace
- 2.5 Ensure any use of insecure employment contracts (e.g. casuals) adequately protects their rights as workers
- 2.6 Increase number of disabled people in work
- 2.7 Reduce gender segregation (the unequal distribution of men and women working in traditionally gender specific roles)
- 2.8 Improve participation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people across apprenticeships
- 2.9 Consider the use of positive action measures in recruitment campaigns where specific groups are under-represented

Updates:

2.1 Job Evaluation and Equal Pay Audit

This year we completed a review of our Job Evaluation policy and procedures and received a satisfactory assurance rating following internal Audit. The review included Job Evaluation refresher training, equal pay and discrimination refresher training, positive action training and the development of a new Job Evaluation system to record post scores.

Our Equal Pay Audit 2018-23 has been drafted. Further progress was paused during the election period but we will be progressing and finalising this report in 2024 (with a set of recommendations).

2.3 Ensure effective policies to prevent and respond to sexual harassment

From October 2024 the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 will strengthen existing protection for workers against sexual harassment. We have started to update our anti-harassment policy to give a greater emphasis on support for victims of harassment, and to encourage staff to report their experiences.

As well as strengthening arrangements in relation to sexual harassment, this will also form part of our work to promote and embed an anti-racist culture as part of our commitment to becoming an inclusive organisation. Ultimately, we want to reinforce a message that treating others with dignity, respect and equity is not extraordinary – it is about humanity and humility, about being kind, fair and empathetic, and is core to our values.

2.5.3 Review our Volunteers Policy

Due to limited capacity within the People and Performance team we were unable to review our Volunteers Policy this year. To increase our capacity to review and update our employment policies, we appointed a HR Policy Officer who started in July 2024 – who is initially looking at our Recruitment and Selection Policy.

2.6 Employment pathways for people with learning disabilities

This year Conwy and Denbighshire, in partnership with North Wales Together, have launched a new employment pathway for individuals with a learning disability who are open to social services. The supported employment pathway offers people intensive job coach support in order to help them find paid employment that would be difficult to source on their own, or a social worker would not have the capacity for. The Employment Pathway Coordinator (EPC) receives all referrals to the new service from social workers, Careers Wales officers, and other professionals. They then meet with the individual and their family or carers to decide what the best route to employment will be for that person, and whether they would benefit from some work experience/volunteering opportunities to build up a CV. We have also referred people to training courses provided by Conwy Employment Hub, the Downs Syndrome Association's WorkFit

programme and Amdani, Conwy's in-house volunteering service aimed at providing volunteering opportunities based on local culture.

Conwy will be adapting the way that day services are currently offered to individuals. The goal is that from now on, people will attend day services on a short-term basis, leaving after a set period of time with experience, and hopefully a qualification that we can use to find paid employment. Day services will always still exist for those that need them, but anyone who is able to work should use them as a training tool rather than a long-term option. The new nursery and café at Bryn Euryn Nursery in Mochdre will be providing tailored work experience opportunities for people, again for set periods of time, which can then be used to source jobs in the community. We will also be running a weekend job scheme for 14+ students at Ysgol Gogarth to gain work experience, hopefully shifting the culture in additional needs schools and colleges to focus more on employment. Going forward, our EPC will also have a presence in our local special schools and colleges, where they will be working with staff to deliver information to the learners on our new service, and employment in general.

Work has been carried out to provide people with a learning disability with a genuine choice about what they want to do. For some, employment could now be achieved in place of traditional day services, volunteering in charity shops or becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). It was previously very difficult for someone with learning disabilities to access paid employment, as Social Workers would rarely have capacity to undertake the time-intensive task of sourcing employment for someone with a learning disability. It is often also the case that without the initial on-the-job support that our job coaches can provide, the barrier faced by the employer of training up someone with a learning disability in the new role would be too much of an undertaking. The creation of these new roles, EPC and job coaches, aims to bridge the gaps in this field and enable people with a learning disability to successfully find paid employment.

Due to the posts having been filled in October 2023, it's still very early to measure achievements, but so far we have had some good successes. Five people have started paid work using the new service, with one more set to start in January 2024. People have accessed training opportunities that they otherwise wouldn't have known about. Volunteering placements

have been found for people to improve their CVs and build experience. We have two people starting a work trial in the Venue Cymru cleaning team in January, building a link there between two Conwy services. People referred to the service have seen their well-being, prospects and social situations all improved. There are currently conversations happening about how to make Local Authority jobs more inclusive, potentially providing Conwy with candidates in the future for vacancies that are sometimes unfilled for a long time.

Other actions and outcomes under the Employment Objective:

- We've become members of Inclusive Employers. This gives us access to a wide range of resources, webinars and good practice that we can learn from and adopt as we work to create an inclusive organisational culture
- The [UNISON Anti-racism Charter](#) was adopted at a full Council meeting in October 2023 (and formally signed in December 2023)
- We started to review our equality, diversity and inclusion learning offer. There is more work to be done in this area, but some of the initial steps we've taken have been to:
 - Work with a local training provider to develop in-person 'Introduction to Inclusive Conwy' training, which was launched as part of our latest Learning Academy Brochure (formerly Learning and Development Plan)
 - Following introductory anti-racism/racism awareness sessions for Councillors (October 2023) and senior managers (January 2024), we started to roll-out further sessions to staff in April
 - We've started to bring together videos, podcasts, books, articles and more, on a range of topics in preparation for launching an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Resource Library in 2024-25
- We developed an employment monitoring survey and a set of FAQs to improve the workforce diversity data we hold. As part of this work we have been looking at best practice in terms of inclusive response options and we plan to launch the survey during National Inclusion Week (September 2024)
- Work has commenced on developing a revised approach to staff surveys – with a focus on smaller, more frequent surveys to act as 'temperature checks' to obtain a snapshot of staff thoughts and feelings
- Our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group started to meet in January 2024 – this is the first step in looking at different

ways to make sure that staff's lived experiences are at the heart of creating an inclusive culture

- We introduced a new Employee Assistance Programme (Vivup) in October 2023, which provides a wide support package for staff, including access to 24/7 counselling services. This replaced our previous offer (Care First)
- Time to Change initiatives to signpost staff to mental health and wellbeing support and resources continued, with communications and events marking occasions such as Time to Talk Day, National Walking Month and World Mental Health Day

Objective 3: We will take action to improve the Living Standards of people disadvantaged by their protected characteristics

Priority Areas:

- 3.1 Take action to address disproportionate negative impact on people with different protected characteristics
- 3.2 Support disabled people's right to independent living including adequate accessible and adaptable housing and related support
- 3.3 Better engagement with disabled people when renovating and designing buildings to ensure full accessibility

Updates:

3.2.3 Support people to live well with dementia (Dementia Listening Project)

The North Wales Regional Collaborative asked us if we could contribute to the ongoing work of the Dementia Listening Campaign by undertaking a community engagement exercise. This was to take place in one town in the county, with the aim of gaining residents' views on the dementia services and facilities available in their community. Any feedback would inform Public Health Wales's future activities.

A steering group was formed, and Llanfairfechan was nominated for the event. The engagement work was fully supported by Conwy libraries, in particular Llanfairfechan Library, Llanfairfechan Town Council, the Conwy Community Well-being Service, the Older People Service and Councillors Penny Andow and Mandy Hawkins.

We held a community engagement and information day in the Llanfairfechan town hall in September 2023, a coffee evening in the community library in October, and had stalls at the Older People's Forum at Llys y Coed and at the Llanfairfechan Christmas fayre. We met with local community groups to discuss the campaign and promote a questionnaire that had been devised for the event. We also spoke to

residents in local shops and cafes and via any other opportunities that arose.

The overall response we received from local residents and community groups has been very positive. By December 2023, 178 people had completed the questionnaire. Once we have received the analysis and report from the North Wales Regional Collaborative we'll be able to study the results and identify the improvements we need to make.

In 2024 we'd like to arrange a feedback event for the residents of Llanfairfechan to thank them for their involvement and discuss how their views have informed the regional report. We also need to set up a local action group for Llanfairfechan to take forward the priorities highlighted in the report by and for their community.

This engagement work started in 2023 and will contribute to the ongoing work of Public Health Wales to improve dementia care and encourage the development of dementia-friendly communities across Wales.

3.2.4 Take up of Direct Payments

Direct Payments (DP) are cash payments paid to individuals so they can organise their support to meet their assessed Social Care needs. This gives them flexibility, choice and control over how their care is delivered.

During 2023-24, our Direct Payments team have:

- After consultation with current recipients of DP, developed and embedded a training programme, to ensure that all frontline staff are confident to both raise awareness and provide support to eligible individuals wishing to receive their support via DP
- Established a Self-Funder Scheme for individuals who, through the outcome of a Financial Assessment, would not be eligible for an offer of DP, and who felt disadvantaged
- Piloted a scheme for individuals whose assessment of need had identified a need to go into residential care, but wished to remain at home with tailored support. After positive public response, the scheme has been adopted as service delivery model option
- Initiated the process of raising the profile of DP in the public domain and creating closer working links with the voluntary sector and community groups via presentations and public events

- Initiated the process of raising the profile of job opportunities with DP by attending public job fairs, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno job centre alternately each week, schools and college events, working with Conwy Employment Hub and the Social Care Employment Mentor, and participating in Colwyn Bay Radio sessions
- Participated in various Welsh Government working groups with regards to the continued development of DP across Wales
- New contract award to an external support provider, whose role is to work with individuals that wish to employ their own staff whilst they go through the recruitment process

3.2.12 Explore the potential for the Housing Improvements team to undertake Healthy Homes checks (supported by Warm Wales)

The Housing Improvements team continue to signpost homeowners and tenants to relevant agencies to help them save money and have warmer homes. Due to reduced resources, it has not been possible for the team to carry out Healthy Homes checks themselves. However, Warm Wales have bid for funding to undertake Health Homes checks across North Wales, including Conwy, which could present an opportunity to maximise.

3.2.14 Provide support for vulnerable residents in Conwy to live independently in appropriate and suitable accommodation

In total, 116 adaptations were provided this year through Disabled Facilities Grant funding. This provided support to over 130 vulnerable residents and their families/carers, to enable them to live independently in their own homes. 429 residents were assessed by the Occupational Therapist based within Housing Improvements in relation to their housing needs and then allocated their position on the Social Housing Register.

Our new Adaptations Policy was formally adopted in February 2024. The policy improves the efficiency of delivering adaptations through Disabled Facilities Grant funding (and other funding), but does add pressures to the service due to an increase in throughput of referrals. During this period there were some staff shortages, however vacancies have now been filled and the opportunity was taken to review roles within the team and the efficiency of the application process has been improved.

3.2.16/19 Working to increase the supply of affordable and accessible accommodation

Our 2018 Local Housing Strategy vision is 'People in Conwy have access to affordable, appropriate and good quality accommodation that enhances their quality of life'. To achieve this it is important the right homes are delivered in the right places and at the right time.

To understand what type of affordable housing is needed, and where, it is important to have an up-to-date Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) in place. Welsh Government issued new guidance in April 2022 alongside a timetable for all local authorities to complete their LHMA – in line with the recommendation set out in the independent review of affordable housing supply in Wales from 2019. An LHMA has been developed in line with the new guidance, which is scheduled to be finalised in 2024. In addition to the LHMA, we publish an annual Local Authority Prospectus, in line with Welsh Government guidance. The Prospectus provides housing associations and other stakeholders with the information they need to make informed decisions about where to search for land and property to deliver new affordable housing.

Social Housing Grant Programme: Welsh Government sets an annual social housing grant budget for each local authority. Conwy's 2023-24 allocation was £11.2m, and with the support of the Registered Social Landlords (RSL) we secured an additional £8.9m – bringing the total funding claim to £20.1m. To build on the work of the social housing development programme and increase the supply of affordable housing at pace, two project groups have been set up – the Council Owned Sites project and the Housing quality, Acquisition and Adaptation project. Both groups sit under the Housing and Homelessness Programme Board.

Council Owned Sites: The aim of this project is to identify and bring forward opportunities to increase the supply of affordable housing by using Council owned land. To support this work an affordable housing framework has been established, which allows us to work with a RSL development partner by 'direct award' or by holding mini competitions for sites.

Housing Quality, Acquisition and Adaptation: The aim of this project is to identify and bring forward opportunities to increase the supply of affordable housing by using existing Council buildings which are no longer in use, and/or open market acquisitions.

The groups were established in April 2023 and to date have achieved the following:

- Secured £832,312 of Welsh Government grant funding to acquire 3 open market properties and refurbish 2 Council assets into housing stock. These units will be available to let by December 2024
- Secured Cabinet approval to transfer land at Dwygyfylchi to an RSL partner
- Secured Cabinet approval to transfer land at Llandudno to an RSL partner
- Established an Affordable Housing Working Group (the group's main aim is to accelerate the status of sites to the planning submission stage. The group has created a standardised project plan, detailing the stages each property or site must go through and the support available)

Leasing Scheme Wales is a new initiative, set-up by Welsh Government in April 2022 to build on the success of the Private Sector Leasing Scheme Pathfinder pilot. The scheme offers property owners access to a grant to undertake works to meet the scheme's property standards, a guaranteed monthly rent and a housing management and day-to-day maintenance service. In return, the property is leased by the Council for between 5 and 20 years and is let at Local Housing Allowance rent levels to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Having successfully bid to take part in the initial pilot, we have been participating in the scheme in partnership with Denbighshire Council. During the course of the pilot 16 properties were let through the scheme – 9 in Conwy and 7 in Denbighshire. The properties are all occupied by households who were owed homelessness duties, with support available to them as required throughout the period of their tenancy. As the pilot ended all local authorities were encouraged to take part in the scheme, and the leases for the 7 Denbighshire properties were transferred to Denbighshire Council in 2023. During 2023-24, 5 properties joined the scheme – of which 4 were long-term empty properties.

Additional Supply: To ensure affordable housing is delivered as part of all new private residential developments, our Affordable Housing Officer is consulted on all planning applications. Housing need data is shared with applicants to ensure the correct housing tenure and mix is developed. In addition to developing new affordable housing, it is important to make best

use of existing housing stock (social and private), including bringing empty properties back into use.

In total, 45 planning applications/pre-application enquiries have been responded to this year, and 78 long-term empty dwellings have returned to occupation as a result of direct action by the Council. Outturn performance improved this year, which is likely due to a combination of increased resources within the team and the introduction of a 3-stage letter process whereby property owners are contacted proactively.

Other actions and outcomes under the Living Standards Objective:

- The continued high level of demand and the lack of supply has created an unprecedented high number of people in temporary accommodation. Reducing and managing this area of the service is a priority as we enter 2024-25
- Our Housing Services team supported 3,344 people via the [Housing Support Grant](#)
- Our Resettlement Team continues to actively support families from Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine (including in relation to housing options)
- Welsh Government funding is available until 2025 to deliver a range of targeted interventions to target Youth Homelessness. We currently have two Youth Homelessness Workers (based in our Youth Service, but working closely with colleagues in Housing Services) who support young people in crisis, and deliver preventative and educational programmes across all schools and Pupil Referral Units. Since September 2023, 937 learners have attended school awareness sessions, 37 young people have achieved Entry 3 Housing and Young People Aged accreditations, and 131 young people have achieved Level 1 Budget and Finance Planning accreditation

Objective 4: We will improve Health Wellbeing and Social Care outcomes

Priority Areas:

- 4.1 Ensure health and wellbeing needs of carers are met
- 4.2 Improve access to services for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers and improve engagement to develop trust
- 4.3 Increase uptake rates of people with learning disabilities taking up annual health checks
- 4.4 Suicide prevention plan Talk to Me 2 is fully evaluated and new action plan to reduce suicide in middle-aged men in Wales
- 4.5 Evaluate progress on mental health to ensure we are meeting the needs of people with different protected characteristics
- 4.6 Use Social Model of Disability language
- 4.7 Implement specific awareness and support for people with neurological conditions

Updates:

4.1 Ensure health and wellbeing needs of carers are met

Our Carers Team (consisting of three full-time Carers Officers) continue to support individuals from 18 years and up who have caring responsibilities. Our duty system ensures that carers have access to an officer, in the absence of their nominated worker, for immediate advice and guidance. Partners and other stakeholders have shared positive feedback regarding the service provided by the team and the integral part it plays in the wellbeing and support of people across our communities.

We promote and share information for carers with our partner agencies to promote the right for carers to request an independent assessment and related appropriate support. An example of this was during Carers Week and Carers Rights day when our Carers Officers and Direct Payments

Officers were available to offer advice and information as part of the wider drive to acknowledge the vital role of carers in Conwy. During the year, 295 new carers needs assessments were undertaken.

4.2 Improve access to services for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers and improve engagement to develop trust

Following the establishment of a Gypsy and Traveller Working and Co-production Group to progress the site and pitch needs identified through the Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (2022), we are in the early stages of reviewing current engagement groups to ensure that community views continue to influence our strategic and operational delivery. Part of this work will be around ensuring that community voices are included and represented when we contribute to the newly created North Wales Gypsy, Roma and Traveller multi-agency regional group.

4.5 Mental Health Recovery College

People who were managing low-level mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, in the community prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, experienced an exacerbation in their symptoms due to lockdown and the resultant isolation. This resulted in a higher demand for support services, such as the Mental Wellness Team in Social Care.

To address this situation, the team have focused on prevention measures, such as the introduction of a Recovery College. Recovery College's support people's self-management of mental health difficulties through learning and education, as well as increasing people's social networks, connection to their community, and offering opportunities to grow resilience and achieve a meaningful life. Our vision is:

“A co-produced recovery college for the county of Conwy, which enables people to restore hope, build resilience, connect and create a community and sustain themselves to have a satisfying and purposeful life”

We are currently focusing on three areas of development:

- **Venue:** Through collaboration with the Culture and Information Service we have been able to develop the first floor of Colwyn Bay Library to provide an initial venue for the Recovery College. This is a safe, therapeutic and non-stigmatising environment where we can

deliver activities and courses that are fundamental to the Recovery College model

- Activity: Arts and craft activity is one of the more popular activities that people find supportive and therapeutic. We have commissioned Creative Journaling sessions that offer relaxation, mindfulness, self-expression, processing and self-discovery opportunities. We aim to increase the number of activities we can refer to by building further relationships with community groups and third sector organisations. We have also offered walking groups and a specific anxiety management programme
- Courses: We have worked closely with Conwy Mind and they are now offering a rolling five-week programme of courses to support people with their mental health

Responding to feedback received, we want to make sure our ongoing offer is a complete, seamless and vibrant provision. This will entail building effective relationships with a range of partners, specifically Health, the third sector and community groups, so there is an equitable opportunity across the county.

4.7 Increasing our autism and neurodivergence offer in Social Care

In Social Care, we have recruited a Conwy and Denbighshire Autism Lead Officer who has focused on:

- Developing and coordinating the Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) Code of Practice implementation plans, which have been independently valued; Conwy is shown to be making good progress
- Improving publicly available information around autism by creating a [dedicated web page](#) in collaboration with autistic people in line with the Code of Practice duties. In addition, there is a local directory of autism-related activities and projects
- Re-establishing regular meetings of the multi-disciplinary ASC stakeholder group, which is chaired by a parent carer
- Developing services to support neuro-divergent (ND) people through a successful bid for Welsh Government funding for ND-specific research, posts and training
- Developing autism-specific projects and activities in the local area, including re-establishing a process for funding

Two training modules are available on our e-learning platform and, although they aren't mandatory, have been promoted via various channels to encourage internal staff and external providers to log in and increase

their knowledge and understanding. So far, 94 Conwy staff have accessed the modules, and we will continue to promote them within our teams.

An autism-specific workforce development task and finish group has been established across Conwy and Denbighshire to help drive forward duties in the autism Code of Practice. It has identified the range of autism training offered to date and the number of staff trained; the group will focus on an autism training needs analysis.

We have commissioned sensory processing training, including the Autism Reality Experience, and sensory integration training, which is aimed at Occupational Therapists. Over 150 people have benefited from the Autism Reality Experience during the year, including Conwy staff, Conwy MIND and parents with links to the five Family Centres. Additional Welsh Government funding is being used to procure a range of enhanced ND training for staff and families; which is being coordinated in partnership with a local third sector organisation.

We will continue to drive forward improvements and developments to raise awareness and understanding of autism and neurodivergence in Conwy. We will consider making the training modules mandatory, as they are in other Local Authorities, and address the gaps in skills and knowledge as a result of increasing complexities around neurodivergent individuals.

We know that delays in diagnostic assessments are causing frustration for autistic people and their families; often they are unsure where or how to access pre-diagnosis support. We hope that our suite of planned activities will start to reduce the barriers to autistic and neurodivergent people receiving appropriate support including:

- Further promotion of e-learning for internal and external staff
- Autism training needs analysis to inform priorities
- Autism awareness sessions at forthcoming employment hub events, plus a possible ND-specific employment event
- Improved information, advice and assistance around diagnosis, and better links with diagnostic services
- Autism-specific projects that support people pre-diagnosis

Other actions and outcomes under the Health, Wellbeing and Social Care Objective:

- **Anti-oppressive Social Work Practice:** To mark International Social Work Day we commissioned Professor Prospera Tadam from University College Dublin to deliver a talk about anti-oppressive social work practice and the importance for social workers to identify and challenge behaviours, values and structures that perpetuate racism. In 2024 we'll be inviting her to deliver three workshops for our social workers, to support us in exploring these themes in Conwy
- **Anti-racist Wales Action Plan Survey (Social Care):** We have been fully committed in encouraging employees to participate in the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan survey for staff in social care. All staff received a direct communication from the Strategic Director of Social Care and Education Services, stressing the importance of the survey, and expressing our firm commitment to a workplace where we celebrate difference and embrace inclusivity. We have used our liaison meetings with commissioned services to promote the survey amongst social care providers and their employees
- **Foster Carer – Equalities Training:** We ensure that our foster carers receive equalities training as part of the National Fostering Learning Framework. Equalities and Diversity, and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity are mandatory training courses for all foster carers and connected persons. The training is provided to ensure that we understand these themes from a young person's experience in order to create environments where diversity is celebrated. Foster carers are then in a position to understand and support LGBTQ+ individuals
- Increased staffing capacity (via Shared Prosperity Funding) has provided opportunities to increase marketing of our library spaces and how they can (and do) support people's health and wellbeing
- The new national bilingual collection for the '[Reading Well](#)' scheme has been launched and promoted
- Our Leisure Services offer a range of programmes that give residents and visitors access to health and wellbeing opportunities. There has been an increase in members and attendances this year and a new inclusion model for activities is being developed which will be launched in September 2024

For more information about actions taken to improve health, wellbeing and social care outcomes for Conwy residents please also see our [Social Care Annual Reports](#).

Objective 5: We will improve Personal Security and Access to Justice

Priority Areas:

- 5.1 Work with our North Wales partners to increase confidence in Hate Crime awareness and reporting
- 5.2 Address Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) by implementing relevant areas of the strategy by 2021
- 5.3 Improve awareness of personal safety and safeguarding

Updates:

5.1.4 Maintain links with the North Wales Community Cohesion Team to support initiatives to improve community cohesion

We continue to liaise with the Regional Cohesion team to manage any issues raised in the community. The regional team make sure we are aware of any developments that come with their links with Welsh Government. Recent campaigns shared include around Hate Crime Awareness Week and Modern Slavery (Anti-Slavery Day).

The regional Community Cohesion teams (East and West) helped to organise and facilitate the Empowering Diverse Communities into Employment event and survey we carried out in Summer 2023, which is currently informing our work in terms of inclusive recruitment. There are plans to look at follow-up engagement activities in collaboration with the Community Cohesion teams.

We also accessed the Community Cohesion grant to help fund some training opportunities this year, including: racism awareness sessions (for staff) and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller training (for staff and Councillors).

5.2.6 Support actions on the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Strategy

The North Wales Vulnerability and Exploitation Board was developed in 2020, bringing together the VAWDASV Strategic Board and the Modern

Slavery Board, with the aim of having a more cohesive approach to all areas of exploitation.

A Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy was developed in 2020-21, which gives clear strategic aims for the region and under that is a Delivery Plan, showing the short, medium, and long-term objectives of the Vulnerability and Exploitation Board. This is continuously updated, to ensure progress and to monitor outcomes. The latest update, from April 2024, is available on our website: [North Wales Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy](#).

5.3 Improve awareness of personal safety and safeguarding

We continue to work collectively with partners on all anti-social behaviour and with preventing crime. This has included partnership working and events to raise awareness of: burglary and theft, online fraud, and domestic abuse (and the support available).

The Community Safety Partnership continues to promote safety at every opportunity, and has a calendar of annual events that ensures we get national, regional and local messages out regularly. The partnership also promotes the [North Wales Community Alert Scheme](#), encouraging people to sign up to the system.

A regional [Serious Violence Response Strategy](#) has been developed and was launched in June 2024, with the aim of creating a North Wales without violence (by working with communities to prevent and reduce serious violence across the region). The key priorities of the strategy are:

- Supporting and enhancing prevention and early intervention around violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and sexual violence
- Promoting contextual safeguarding to work with children and young people vulnerable to exploitation and/or modern slavery
- Identifying and implementing improvements, best practice and innovation as a partnership to respond to serious violence
- Building a preventative approach in North Wales, through an understanding of risk, adverse childhood experiences and trauma

Objective 6: Increase Access to Participation and improve diversity in decision making

Priority Areas:

- 6.1 Increase awareness of the importance of diversity in political representation and decision making bodies
- 6.2 Public transport providers* to provide training to staff to ensure they meet the needs of disabled people (*Note: Conwy County Borough Council does not provide public transport but is involved in some non-commercial routes and community transport)
- 6.3 Ensure engagement is inclusive
- 6.4 Access to services should be supported by appropriate language support

Updates:

6.3 Ensure engagement is inclusive

Accessible Communications: Eight Digital Accessibility training sessions have been delivered to over 40 staff members across a range of services. This includes bespoke sessions held with departmental teams responsible for the publication of certain types of content (e.g. strategic documents). The training is supported by pages on the Intranet which staff can access to learn more about good practice in digital accessibility. Projects have also been undertaken to restructure and re-write new web page content that is easier to understand, easier to navigate on mobile devices, and complies with Digital Accessibility regulations.

We are currently exploring how we can use AI software, created and made available by Swindon Council as open source software, to support us in creating more Plain English and Easy Read versions of documents.

6.3.5 Encouraging learning and speaking Welsh

There were a variety of initiatives undertaken throughout the year to encourage learning and speaking Welsh:

- Learning Welsh at Work:

- Work Welsh Scheme: This year, 78 staff members took part in the scheme - which aims to improve Welsh language skills in the workplace. There were 4 courses held (at Entry, Intermediate and Higher levels) throughout the year.
- Welsh Taster Courses: 40 people registered for a total of 79 taster courses that they complete independently online. Of the 79 courses, 41 were completed and the rest were partially completed. The courses are available free of charge to staff members and are in addition to the tutor-led provision. It was great to see that the number of staff that registered for taster courses was much higher than last year
- Sgwrsio Scheme: During the year, we developed our Sgwrsio Scheme (Speaking Welsh at Work) where a learner on an Intermediate level is paired with a fluent Welsh speaker to speak with them informally in Welsh. At the moment we have 25 pairs who meet regularly – with 11 new pairs joining since last year
- Welsh Language on the Conwy website: Last year we developed a new webpage on the Council’s website all about [Welsh-medium education](#). This year, together with the Council’s Education Officers, we worked with the IT department to further develop the page. The page is now live and includes information about Welsh-medium education, from pre-school to further/higher education, and about the immersion program. In addition, there is a page for parents/guardians that answers [frequently asked questions](#) about Welsh-medium education, for example “What support can I get if I don’t speak Welsh?” or “How can I help with homework?”. As well as developing a new education page, we also developed a brand new landing page on the county’s website for all matters relating to the Welsh language. The page is called [‘The Welsh Language - A Living Thriving Language’](#) and it’s full of information about the Welsh language in Conwy
- Leading in a Bilingual Country: This year we made a successful bid to take part in an exciting new program called Leading in a Bilingual Country. Two Heads of Service, who are learning Welsh, were chosen to participate in order to become ambassadors for organisational culture where bilingualism can thrive. They learned about the latest Welsh language developments from experts and looked at ideas about the language, experiences of the language and hopes for the future. The program was an integral part of the development of the new Welsh Language Promotion Strategy
- Welsh Language Strategic Forum: we established a new forum to link in with the Council’s new Welsh Language Promotion Strategy.

The forum aims to bring various organisations across the county together to discuss how we can work together to promote the Welsh language across the county. The first meeting was held in June 2023 with representatives from organisations including Urdd Conwy, Menter Iaith Conwy, Mudiad Meithrin, Coleg Llandrillo Menai, our Culture and Libraries services, Education officers and staff from primary and secondary schools

- Welsh Language Newsletter: We have continued with the newsletter since launching it last year and it has continued to develop. The purpose of this newsletter is to celebrate Welsh in Conwy and provide information to staff about various initiatives
- Word of the Week: This year we started to share ‘Word of the Week’ posters through our Teams channel for staff. The posters varied from week to week, and words, idioms, phrases and sayings were shared
- Teams Backgrounds: We developed a range of Teams backgrounds to include more with the Working Welsh logo and the learning Welsh logo to make the Welsh language more visible in our online meetings

6.5.1 Delivery of Creu Conwy (Culture Strategy)

The Creu Conwy action plan was agreed in October 2023, and there has been engagement with more than 5,000 people so far across a range of festivals, events and workshops – including Open Doors Extra, Winter Sounds and Creu Conwy Ifanc.

Some of the projects currently being delivered include:

- **Amdani! Conwy** – to develop cultural volunteering infrastructure and opportunities throughout the county. The project has an emphasis on supporting equitable access to volunteering for disabled, d/Deaf and neurodivergent people. The project is now midway through the second year of delivery and is operating successfully around the county – with 87 volunteers recruited and 96 opportunities having taken place to date. Through feedback, many volunteers have reported that the programme is helping to break down barriers to volunteering and progress towards employment
- Funding to support the enhancement and coordination of the existing Young Creatives programmes under the [Creu Conwy Ifanc](#) banner
- **Taith**, a project looking at creative wellbeing and recovery with a particular focus on mental health, linking in with the new Recovery College model at Colwyn Bay Library

Two of the projects delivered under Creu Conwy have been explored in more detail below:

Out and About – LGBTQ+ Series

‘Out and About’ is an LGBTQ+ Series which takes place at library spaces throughout Conwy. Arranged by the Conwy Museum Service, the series hosts events or workshops once a month exploring the theme of LGBTQ+ History.



Conwy Museum Service’s first LGBTQ+ events were in February 2023 for LGBTQ+ History Month. From feedback and evaluation, it was recognised that there was a need for activities and spaces for queer folks in North Wales that were not a typical meeting place like a pub. Additionally, knowledge about LGBTQ+ History in Conwy County needed to reach a wider audience and required more research; to expand on the Conwy Archives created [LGBTQ+ History County Timeline](#).



Funded by Welsh Government through the Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales and Pride Cymru, Out and About was devised. Out and About creates spaces for the public of all ages to learn about LGBTQ+ History, share their own stories, and creates a sense of community. Ultimately, each session raises awareness of the

Conwy Museum Service in the hope that when people are looking to donate and preserve LGBTQ+ history, they will consider the Museum.

The Series also provided new volunteering opportunities by partnering with [Amdani! Conwy](#), a volunteer project which aims to make arts, culture and heritage fun, accessible and inclusive.

Some of the recent Out and About sessions have included:

- A Flower Sketchbook Workshop and a Pride Tote Bag Workshop
- Gender and Sexuality: Creating a Safe Space Workshop
- Proud Creative Writing Workshop
- Queer Welsh Stories Creative Writing Workshop
- ‘Echoes of LGBTQ+ in Llandudno’ Talk

Feedback from one participant highlighted the need for regular opportunities for the local LGBTQ+ community to come together to learn, share and connect:

“Offering accessible sessions like this one, creating visibility through stories told today, for example. Regular sessions to bring the local LGBTQ+ community together, to learn, share, connect. Today was great. Thank you. WE NEED THIS!”

For more information about the Out and About Series, please see: [Conwy Culture | Out and About: an LGBTQ+ series](#) and [Wellbeing study in Welsh museums: case studies | GOV.WALES](#)

Re-Imagining Congo House/African Institute

Re-Imagining Congo House/African Institute is an exhibition staged by Conwy Museum Service. The Institute was based in Colwyn Bay between 1889 and 1912. The exhibition has been funded by AIM and Welsh Government through the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan along with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The Museum Service worked with people from North Wales and Central Africa to tell the story of the African Institute, supported by heritage consultants Dr Marian Gwyn, Raj Pal, Professor Robert Burroughs, Colwyn Bay group NWAMI (Networking For World Awareness Of Multicultural Integration), and Museums Officer, Rachel Evans. The exhibition uses art, animation, and artefacts to explore different perspectives on this important part of Black History in Wales.



The exhibition showcases the creative reflections from an art project led by Cameroonian, North Wales based artist Mfikela Jean Samuel who worked with Art Teacher Aimee Jones, and pupils from Ysgol Bryn Elian. They explored the story of the Institute to produce a series of paintings.

When talking of the project Mfikela Jean Samuel said “As an African artist living in North Wales, this project to me is a great fusion of experiences that brings together the past and the present story of immigrants and visitors who come to North Wales”.

As part of this, TAPE Community Music and Film led an animation project with Ysgol Y Gogarth and members of the Colwyn Bay community to bring to life some of the stories of the African Institute through animation.

For more information about the exhibition – and to view the poem animation and community animation videos - please see: [Conwy Culture | Re-Imagining Congo House / African Institute](#)

Other actions and outcomes under the Participation Objective:

- We continue to promote the [Hynt Card](#), and provide relaxed, signed and audio described performances at Venue Cymru and Theatr Colwyn. We are currently looking for funding opportunities that would allow us to resume Dementia-Friendly screenings
- The Culture team worked with a reverse mentor (as part of a Race Council Cymru project) to identify ways of addressing unconscious bias and to identify priorities for change – a further update on the

outcomes of this work will be available as part of our next Inclusive Conwy Plan report

- Conwy's Events Team worked closely with Together for Colwyn Bay (organisers of Colwyn Pride) again - co-locating Pride to sit alongside our Prom Xtra event to maximise the savings to be made from running these events back to back. Sharing key costs such as road closures, staging and generator hire, barriers and toilet facilities helped reduce delivery costs for Prom Xtra as well as providing valuable support in kind for Colwyn Pride
- The Archive and Museums Services have been partners in the House of Memories Cymru project, which aims to use museum and archive materials as a means to prompt reminiscence in people living with dementia. Conwy Culture Centre hosted training sessions for professional and family carers
- 'A Bay View': In November, Oriel Colwyn, along with photographer Mark McNulty, set up a pop-up photo studio in an empty unit within Bay View Shopping Centre (Colwyn Bay). 307 people were photographed over a period of four days to create an important archive and exhibition of life in the town in 2023. The exhibition was displayed in shop windows, as well as in the foyer of Coed Pella. Feedback from visitors to the exhibition included:

"It's interesting to see how many different styles, cultures, and ages are living in Colwyn Bay, and it makes me feel relieved to know that a record is being kept for years to come"

"It makes people feel special and seen, and connected to each other which is so important"

"It shows how diverse the community is and it shows the beauty of all the different characters in the area. It's done a fantastic job of showing everyone within the community as individuals, but also being part of a larger group"

Objective 7: Develop our knowledge and understanding of the socio-economic duty to identify the key areas of impact to be addressed under each of our other 6 objectives

Updates:

As part of developing the Inclusive Conwy Plan 2024-28, we updated this objective following the commencement of the Socio-economic Duty in 2021 (which was supported by a series of awareness raising sessions for staff at the time). There is overlap with several actions reported on in this report (e.g. delivery of free school meals, work to increase the supply of affordable and accessible accommodation) and a set of actions were developed as part of the Inclusive Conwy Plan Action Plan, which will be reported on in our next report in 2025.

Other actions and outcomes under the Socio-economic Duty Objective:

- Our Small Steps Big Future website (supporting Care Leavers in Conwy) has been updated to provide advice and information about where to seek support for household costs
- Our Family Support Teams and Family Centres continue to be a busy and vital hub for Conwy families. This year the Family Centres received 972 referrals for support – including via:
 - Access to information and advice
 - Groups that are open for anyone to attend
 - Targeted groups and courses, e.g. parenting courses
 - One to one support from a Family Worker
 - Access to other specialist support
- Relaunched a Financial Wellbeing site for staff called My Money Matters, as well as providing advice and guidance alongside the existing Additional Voluntary Contribution (AVC) Scheme
- Our Welfare Rights team continue to provide free and confidential advice on a range of social security benefits, including: Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Disability Living Allowance for Children, Attendance Allowance, Pension Credit and Universal Credit. They also advice on other allowances that residents might be entitled to, including free school meals and uniform grants

4. Employment Information

4.1 Employment Monitoring Reports

Our annual employment monitoring reports help us to monitor whether our workforce is reflective of the diverse communities we work with.

These reports are used to review the effectiveness of our employment policies and practices and to consider whether there has been any potential lack of fairness or discrimination. Data which indicates this could be the case in the application of a policy or practice is investigated in more depth and where necessary, actions are taken to review the relevant policy or practice. We review all our policies periodically and carry out Equality Impact Assessments using the data from our latest Employment Monitoring Report.

The reports are published annually on our website: [Employment Monitoring](#)

4.2 Equal Pay and Pay Differences

The Equality Act 2010 requires that women and men are paid on equally favourable terms where they are employed on 'like work', 'work rated as equivalent' or 'work of equal value'. We carried out an extensive process of job evaluation that was concluded during 2010-11, with the objective of equalising pay in line with the defined terms above. More recently, we reviewed and updated our Job Evaluation Policy and Procedures in 2023.

We conducted an Equal Pay Audit in 2009 as part of the Equality Impact Assessment when undertaking Job Evaluation (JE). This audit included a before and after analysis by gender of old grades and proposed new grades. We recently undertook an Equal Pay Audit for the 5-year period between April 2018 and March 2023. This audit analyses pay data by protected characteristic. We are aiming to finalise the audit in 2024 alongside a set of recommendations that will aim to address any specific issues identified.

Equal pay is about paying people the same for work of equal value. Through the implementation of our Job Evaluation Scheme, we avoid equal pay claims in Conwy County Borough Council. All our jobs under Single Status (G01-G12 on our pay scale) are scored using the Greater

London Provincial Council (GLPC) Scheme, which measures posts according to the level of supervision, knowledge, creativity required, complexity of contacts with others, the resources they are responsible for, the level and impact of decisions they make and work context. Similarly, our Chief Officer posts are scored under HAY and pay for Teachers and other staff under Soulbury terms that are negotiated nationally.

A **pay gap** relates to the difference in pay between groups of people with different protected groups, e.g., the difference between what men typically earn in an organisation compared to what women earn, irrespective of their role or seniority. Therefore, any pay gap is more a reflection of our workforce profile than about unequal rewards for people with different protected characteristics doing the same job.

We have regularly tracked pay gap data since that time and some of this data can be seen in the table below, which shows the progress since 2011 on the pay gap using the same calculation for gender, disability, ethnicity and latterly age.

Pay Gap	31.3.11	31.3.15	31.3.19	31.3.23	31.3.24	Trend
Gender Pay Gap - range between Grades G01-G12	+1.1 - 0%	+0.8 - +1.9%	-1.9 - +1.2%	-1.7 - +1.3%	-0.8 - +1.2%	-
Gender Pay Gap - Grades G01-G12	+13.1%	+9.3%	+5.5%	+4.9%	+4.2%	Decreased – below 5%
Gender Pay Gap – All Posts	+8.8%	+6.5%	+2.8%	+3.5%	+2.3%	Decreased – below 5%
Disability Pay Gap - Grades G01-G12	-	-	-	-10.4%	-6.3%	Increased – below 5%
Disability Pay Gap - All Posts	-10%	-	-0.9%	+0.7%	+1.3%	Increased – below 5%
Ethnicity Pay Gap - Grades G01-G12	-	-	-5.0%	-2.9%	-4.1%	Decreased – below 5%
Ethnicity Pay Gap - All Posts	+2.5%	-	+8.1%	+8.8%	+7%	Decreased – above 5%
Age (50+) Pay Gap - Grades G01-G12	-	-	-	+0.3%	+0.5%	Increased – below 5%

Pay Gap	31.3.11	31.3.15	31.3.19	31.3.23	31.3.24	Trend
Age (50+) Pay Gap - All Grades	-	-	+2.2%	+2.9%	+2.4%	Decreased – below 5%

The EHRC recommends that pay gaps of 5% or more should be treated as significant. Of our latest figures, this applies to the Ethnicity Pay Gap – All Posts, 7%.

Actions to further understand and address this pay gap include:

1. Our work will be underpinned by an approach that looks to educate staff throughout the organisation on the importance of anti-racism, and provide them with the knowledge and skills to tackle racist, prejudicial and derogatory behaviours. We have started to review our equality, diversity and inclusion training offer (with introductory sessions) but there is more work to be done in this area
2. Improving the level of equality monitoring data that we hold. As of the 31st March 2024, we held data for 60% of staff on ethnicity. We have designed a survey and some FAQs (explaining why we are asking for the information) with the aim of improving data levels throughout the organisation, which will provide us with more accurate data about all pay gaps
3. We have started to review our Recruitment and Selection Policy. We will look at this through an anti-racist lens to ensure that any bias' that impact outcomes for ethnic minority candidates are removed and that we are actively looking to attract a diverse range of applicants. We are planning to provide positive action guidance, including good practice examples, alongside the policy and are looking at the training offered to recruiting managers to ensure they are confident practicing inclusive recruitment. This work is informed by engagement carried out in 2023, but we must ensure that the conversation continues more widely (both internally and externally)
4. Review our approach to staff engagement and support in terms of workforce planning and career progression - including exploring options which have been effective in other organisations (e.g. staff networks, mentoring)

Gender Pay Gap

If we look at Grades G01-G12, the gender pay difference between grades is fairly constant at between -0.75% and +1.23%. Indeed, in Grades G01, G02, G07, G08, G09 and G11, pay marginally favours women, suggesting

that there is no substantial gender pay gap between individual Grades G01-G12. The gap of 4.2% for grades G01-G12 is likely to be attributed to the large number of women employed in G01 (women in G01 posts account for 29.09% of all posts in grades G01-G12). This is not uncommon in the public sector due to the labour intensive nature of the work undertaken. Using the same calculation, there is an overall gender pay gap of 2.3% when including all staff employed by the Council, which is lower than on the 31st March 2023.

On 6 April 2017 the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017 came into force, requiring all organisations employing 250 or more employees to report their Gender Pay Gap, using a prescribed calculation, on their website and on the designated government website at <https://www.gov.uk/report-gender-pay-gap-data>. In Wales, public sector organisations have been exempt from this requirement as they already have the Statutory Duties (Wales) Regulations 2011 which requires them to report on the pay gap not only for gender but also for other protected groups.

We have calculated our gender pay gap using the calculation in the 2017 Regulations, which shows a slightly different figure to those above, as shown in the table below:

Gender Pay Gap National Calculation as at 31st March 2024

	Female Hourly Rate (£)	Male Hourly Rate (£)	Difference in Hourly Rate (£)	Mean Gender Pay Gap	Median Gender Pay Gap
Mean (Average) Gender Hourly Rate	16.74	17.22	0.48	2.79%	-
Median (Middle) Gender Hourly Rate	13.28	13.98	0.70	-	5.03%

	Upper Quartile	Upper Middle Quartile	Lower Middle Quartile	Lower Quartile	Total
% of Males	25.89	34.16	28.44	16.38	26.22
Number of Males	335	442	368	212	1,357
% Females	74.11	65.84	71.56	83.62	73.78

	Upper Quartile	Upper Middle Quartile	Lower Middle Quartile	Lower Quartile	Total
Number of Females	959	852	926	1,082	3,819

(With Teachers)

The mean gender pay gap uses an average calculation using the prescribed categories of staff to include. The median calculation puts all staff in a column from lowest to highest paid and takes the middle hourly rate for both men and women and compares the difference.

This continues a trend of our gender pay gap reducing in recent years when using the national calculation, with higher gender pay gap figures in 2022 (Mean: 8.98%, Median: 9.25%) and 2023 (Mean: 4.18%, Median: 8.75%). The narrowing of the gender pay gap could have been due in part to the structure of the national pay deal over the previous years. In 2022-23 and 2023-24, salaries within all G01 to G12 roles received a flat rate increase, which represents a higher proportion increase in salaries for lower quartile pay grades (16% male and 84% female).

Age Pay Gap

We have split the age data into two categories, those below 50 years of age and those 50 and above. In Grades G01-G12, the pay gap in the under 50s as a percentage of over 50s ranges from -2.34% to +2.23% which is negligible and is dependent on length of service. Similarly the gap in the over 50s as a percentage of the under 50s ranges from -2.28% to +2.28%. Head of Service level posts show a slight pay gap in favour of those over 50 of 0.20%. Head Teachers, Deputy Head Teachers and Teaching staff on Soulbury conditions show a pay gap in favour of over 50s that ranges from 5.73% to 9.92%. The overall pay gap shows that employees under 50 are (on average) paid 2.5% more than employees aged 50 and above.

Ethnicity Pay Gap

Historical data shows fluctuations in the pay gap for ethnic minority staff ranging from 2.45% in 2011 to 9.90% in 2021. While the ethnicity pay gap for staff on Grades G01 to G12 was -4.1%, the pay gap for all ethnic minority staff on the 31st March 2024 was 7.0% (compared to 8.8% in 2023). The number of positions held by ethnic minority staff increased slightly this year (from 121 to 134). 69% of positions held by ethnic minority staff were in Grades G01-G05 in March 2024, the comparative figure for

the total workforce was 66%. These figures are potentially more susceptible to large changes because we only hold monitoring data for 60% of the workforce on race, and the number of positions held by ethnic minority staff is low and we will be working to improve workforce diversity data to develop a better evidence base. Some of the actions we have identified to help address the 7% pay gap have been set out above.

Disability Pay Gap

Historical data shows fluctuations in the pay gap for disabled people ranging from -10% to 0% demonstrating that if anything, the pay gap favours disabled people. However, the reliability of this data is affected by the fact that we only hold disability data for 57% of our workforce and therefore it is difficult to draw statistical conclusions from the data.

We have not provided pay gap data for the remaining protected groups as our data set is smaller and is therefore less reliable. We will continue to improve our collection of data where there are gaps to improve reporting. However, staff always have the right to state that they 'prefer not to say' in response to equality monitoring questions.

5. Conclusion

Throughout the period of the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24, there have been a range of events and factors which have influenced our equality, diversity and inclusion work, including:

- The Covid-19 Pandemic, and the impact this had on our residents, staff and on our service delivery
- A cost of living crisis and severe inflationary pressures, which have had a significant impact on residents and staff, as well as on our budgetary pressures and service delivery
- The publication and implementation of Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (2022) and LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales (2023), as well as the commencement of the Socio-economic Duty (2021)

As highlighted in this report, and in previous [annual reports](#), there has been a lot of work highlighting our commitment to being an inclusive organisation. However, we know there is more that we can and must do to ensure that everyone in Conwy is treated with kindness, fairness and empathy.

Increasing our capacity will be an important step to deliver on these aims, and we are looking to recruit to an additional post in 2024-25. We know that change won't happen overnight but we are committed to long-term actions that will help to create a culture where all staff understand the importance of, and take responsibility for, equality, diversity and inclusion.

One of the key steps for us in 2024-25 will be to carry out a baseline review of our current position to understand areas of strength and weakness. We are currently considering the [Six Pillars of Inclusion and Diversity](#) (from Inclusive Employers) as a model for this review.

Ultimately, whichever model we adopt, it will be crucial that we work towards an inclusive culture internally and we will be looking to do this by:

- Reviewing our approach to staff engagement, to ensure that staff voices and lived experiences are at the heart of creating inclusive workplace cultures
- Continuing to expand our equality, diversity and inclusion learning offer, adopting a tiered approach that builds knowledge and confidence across the organisation on a range of topics
- Reviewing our policies and practices to remove bias', to make sure systemic outcomes are fair for everyone

Finally, it will be important that as we move forwards and look to do more, we look at improving processes for monitoring the impact of our equality, diversity and inclusion approach. As we work through times of intense budgetary pressures we need to make sure the changes we introduce are effective in positively impacting people's lives, so that anyone who lives in, works in or visits Conwy feels a sense of belonging when interacting with our services.