



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

C Hanagan
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
2 Llys Cadwyn
Taff Street
Pontypridd
CF37 4TH

Meeting Contact: Sarah Daniel (scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk 07385 086 169)

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a meeting of **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2022-2027 COMMITTEE** to be held HYBRID at the Council Chamber, Llys Cadwyn, Taff Street, Pontypridd, CF37 4TH on **MONDAY, 26TH FEBRUARY, 2024** at **5.00 PM.**

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Thursday, 22 February 2024 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

It is the intention to live stream this meeting, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

AGENDA

**Page
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1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

2. MINUTES

To receive for approval the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny

3. CONSULTATION LINKS

Information is provided in respect of relevant [consultations](#) for consideration by the Committee.

3.1. CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

[Cabinet Work Programme](#)

4. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN

Following a meeting of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee held on the 22 January 2024, the Committee concluded to defer consideration of the WESP to a future Committee meeting. Following discussions with the Chair of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (And in-line with the Overview & Scrutiny Procedural Rules), members are asked to scrutinise and challenge the Annual Work Plan. Members of the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee have been invited to attend for this item of business.

23 - 112

5. MANAGEMENT OF TIP SAFETY IN RCTCBC

To provide Members with an overview of the work that the Tip Safety Team have undertaken in the last year with respect to the management, monitoring and oversight of disused coal tips within the County Borough.

113 - 124

6. DRAFT ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2022-23

To provide Members with the opportunity to pre-scrutinise the Council's draft Annual Equality report 2022-23

125 - 210

7. DRAFT STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN

To pre-scrutinise the Council's Draft Strategic Equality Plan

211 - 274

8. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

9. CHAIRS REVIEW AND CLOSE

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee
(County Borough Councillor J Edwards and County Borough Councillor B Stephens
respectively)

County Borough Councillors:- Councillor M Ashford, Councillor R Bevan,
Councillor J Bonetto, Councillor R Davis, Councillor S Evans, Councillor S Evans,
Councillor C Middle, Councillor K Morgan, Councillor S Morgans,
Councillor G L Warren, Councillor M Powell and Councillor S Emanuel

Cc: Education Members and Co-opted Members

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2022-2027 COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee held on Thursday, 11 January 2024 at 10.30 am

This meeting was live streamed, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

County Borough Councillors – The following Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee Councillors were present online

Councillor J Edwards (Chair)

Councillor B Stephens	Councillor M Ashford
Councillor R Bevan	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor R Davis	Councillor Sheryl Evans
Councillor C Middle	Councillor K Morgan
Councillor S Morgans	Councillor G L Warren
Councillor S Emanuel	

Officers in attendance:-

Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services and Communications
Mr A Wilkins, Director Legal Services
Ms L Howell, 21st Century School Organisation and Business Manager
Ms A Richards, Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Ms J Nicholls, Democratic Services Officer

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor R Lewis (Cabinet Member Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language)
Councillor A Rogers
Councillor S Trask
Councillor D Grehan

Apologies for absence

Councillor Sera Evans Councillor M Powell

46 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillor Sera Evans.

47 Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations of interests were made pertaining to the agenda:

County Borough Councillor K Morgan – Personal interest- "I will contribute to the

discussion but note vote on the item as I have spoken on the matter previously”

County Borough Councillor A Rogers- Personal interest- “I am a Governor of Rhigos and Hirwaun Primary Schools”

48 Call In of the Cabinet Decision of the Proposal to Close Rhigos Primary School with Pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications presented the report which outlined the procedure for the meeting, as set out in rule 17 of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules. The Service Director advised that a call-in request was received from County Borough Councillors S Trask, A Rogers and D Grehan within the prescribed timescales, on 21st December 2023, which complied with the relevant criteria and considered valid by the proper officer.

The call-in requested that the decision of Cabinet in respect of the proposal to close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School, taken at its meeting held on the 18th December 2023, be considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Service Director outlined the procedures for the meeting with the three signatories, who signed the call-in form, to address Committee first, setting out their reasons for requesting the call-in and why they consider the decision should be referred back to the decision maker for reconsideration. Secondly, the registered public speakers will have the opportunity to address Members before the Director of Education & Inclusion Services and Cabinet Member address the comments made by the speakers. Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee will have the opportunity to consider the valid reasons set out in the report together with all contributions before voting on whether they consider whether the matter should be referred back to Cabinet.

It was confirmed that the nominated signatory, Councillor D Grehan, would make the final address before a roll call vote is taken on whether or not to refer the matter back to the relevant decision maker for reconsideration. It will be for the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to clarify and summarise the Committee’s decision.

Councillor S Trask

Councillor Trask considered the decision contained within the report as out of date and incomplete. In his role as a family court Magistrate, Councillor Trask stated that he is often called upon to make decisions for other people’s children with all information available to him which he considered should be the case for the Local Authority. He commented that several matters have developed since the original report on the impact on the school closure such as the LEA response which indicates that transportation is only provided at the beginning and end of the school day. With a thriving breakfast club and one of the highest pupil attendances in the area, Councillor Trask feared that with unreliable public transport and limited options, especially in emergencies, the rising cost of public transport (citing the cost of a return ticket from Rhigos to Hirwaun as £5.20 return) may be a barrier to families accessing the breakfast club and other

before and after school programmes, impacting the educational experience and social development of many young children. He raised concerns regarding the charge for the additional childcare services also raises concerns for the equity and support for vulnerable families which is contrary to the strategic priority of the Director of Education & Inclusion Services.

Councillor Trask commented that also contrary to the initial report is that Rhigos Primary School is a safe and well-maintained building which has received significant investment with many unanswered questions about future costs.

Councillor Trask raised concern regarding the home to school transport proposals as he considered the Council's aim to encourage active travel conflicts with the proposal to close Rhigos Primary. He cited the reliance on the use of home to school transport, private cars or poor public transport as having a negative impact on efforts to reduce its carbon footprint. The proposal contradicts the Council's tackling climate change strategy and the Welsh Government's plan for a low carbon Wales with many additional cars on the roads at the beginning and end of the school day which could potentially impact on the community of Rhigos.

In conclusion, Councillor Trask commented that the closure of Rhigos Primary School raises significant challenges for the community, the wellbeing of the children, the impact on active travel and the environmental issues.

Councillor A Rogers

Councillor Rogers considered that referring the matter back would enable Cabinet to reconsider everyone's views for the benefit of the children and residents of Rhigos.

Councillor Rogers referred to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which has been adopted by both the Council and Welsh Government and he felt that the three core aims would not be adhered to should the proposal progress. Councillor Rogers referred specifically to article 13.1 and 13.2 (freedom of expression) and he commented that the School Council's request to address Cabinet on the 18th December was declined by the Chair preventing the children, who were eager to participate, from making their views heard.

With regard to Article 31.2 (Leisure, play and culture), Councillor Rogers mentioned the large outdoor space at Rhigos School and the extra-curricular sports such as netball and football that currently take place at the school which he feared would not be possible if they were transferred to Hirwaun Primary. With one bus available from Hirwaun School at the start and end of the school day Councillor Rogers felt this arrangement may prevent pupils from participating in any extra-curricular activities.

Article 27.1 (adequate standard of living)- Councillor Rogers stated that the child poverty rate has risen in Wales and without the opportunity to take part in the free breakfast club currently available in Rhigos Primary, (where almost 50% of all pupils use the breakfast club) pupils may lose the opportunity to receive a free healthy breakfast each day and socialise with their peers. He added that the LEA commented that depending on the home to school transport arrangements, pupils may have the opportunity to participate in the breakfast club and there were no solutions offered by Cabinet.

Councillor Rogers referred to both the Minister for Education & Welsh Language and the Children's Commissioner for Wales who have both expressed the importance of the voice of the child being central to the decision-making and value the involvement of the pupils in the very policies that affect them. He added that throughout the consultation process many queries have remained unanswered such as the uncertainty around childcare and play schemes in Hirwaun as the private childcare provider in Hirwaun is now full until September 2024 and is likely to be the case beyond that period. He added that many other queries remain unanswered such as the remaining cost of the work at Rhigos Primary School and costings for the Home to School Transport between Hirwaun and Rhigos primary School.

Councillor Rogers likened the unanswered questions surrounding the proposals to that of the proposed closure of Caegarw Primary School in 2013 (which remained open) when many questions on the practical implementation remained unanswered. He referred to the overwhelming majority of responses (94.5%) against the proposals to close Rhigos Primary School cannot be ignored.

Councillor Rogers concluded his representation by addressing the alternative to the proposals to close Rhigos Primary, maintaining the status quo with solar panels and equipment for a new outdoor area for the children already in place, there would be no requirement for WG or RCT investment regarding home to school transport and there would be no disruption to the parents, carers, pupils and staff, with the projected pupil numbers may increase. Investment for Rhigos Primary School, with match funding from local businesses or grants as the school has been described as an energy efficient school with an up to date property condition survey.

Councillor D Grehan

- Councillor Grehan referred to points 1 and 6 of the reasons for the call-in, namely the *negative impact of the proposal for pupils and the wider community of Rhigos especially in line with the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which requires RCTCBC to think about the long-term impact of decisions on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change and point 6 which refers to the potential impact of the decision both positive and negative.*

Councillor Grehan added that the decision should be referred back to Cabinet as in his opinion, these points were not fully considered. Even though training on the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 was delivered to all Members recently, the correct attention was not given to this matter and more consideration should have been given to the negative effects of the proposal as it will affect future generations. He commented that the Commissioner has stated that entry to high standards of local education with low carbon omissions is very important and it will continue to impact on the wellbeing of people living in Wales. The wellbeing targets, a successful Wales, a more healthy Wales and a Wales of more co-ordinated communities.. There will be a negative effect across the four Wellbeing targets for the pupils of Rhigos.

Councillor Grehan commented that the Commissioner helpfully poses the following questions:

One - have the decisions have been taken exclusively by the LEA or in

conjunction with the local residents and will the proposals benefit the community, are these ideas of the people in power or the residents in the community.

Two -How will these propositions affect inclusivity? The pupils of Rhigos will find it difficult to socialise in Hirwaun due to the distance and transport issues. He added that Rhigos Primary has been described by Estyn as the heart of the community and this aspect will be lost should the proposal go ahead. Is the decision encouraging more use of vehicles as parents have to collect and drop off pupils and the public record will show that there was no consideration of these matters in the meetings when these points were raised.

Councillor D Grehan referred to the responses to the consultation from the community regarding the long term effects, which were raised by pupils, teachers and the community, the very people that these proposals affect. He stated that Rhigos is a small rural school which benefits from a grant, which was applied for by this council. He added that the decision making process failed to take into account the negative effects of closing a small rural school which provide many social and academic aspects, vital in engaging pupils and parents from the most deprived areas in rural communities. Councillor Grehan stressed that removing a school from a village goes against all the policies which encourage more healthy and inclusive communities including the Council's obligations under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Councillor Grehan concluded that the decision should be referred back to Cabinet for these reasons to be considered.

Following conclusion of the presentations by the three signatories to the call-in, there followed an address from the public speakers, Mr J Morris and Ms S Oliver who were both provided five minutes in which to address Committee.

The Chair thanked them all for their valuable contributions and invited the Service Director, Democratic Services to clarify the purpose of the meeting which is to consider the specific seven reasons contained within the call-in and for Members to determine whether or not to refer the matter back to Cabinet for its deliberation.

The Director of Education & Inclusion Services, as the report author, acknowledged that this is an emotive issue and she addressed the points raised in the call-in.

The Director highlighted that a full socio economic and equality assessment have been carried out as part of the consultation process and this, as a live document, will continue to be added to throughout the process. In addition, and a community impact assessment has also been included and written in accordance with the School Organisation Code for 2018. The Director added that information in relation to the alignment with the proposal against the aims of the Future Generations Act 2015 was included in both Cabinet reports (and still available to view on the Council's website).

The Director confirmed that all the responses received from stakeholders including the presentations delivered by the children of Rhigos have been viewed by the Cabinet and all the information has been made available to the Cabinet Members. She added that children and young people have been actively involved in the consultation process and the council has met with its obligations in terms of the School Organisation Code and children have presented their views. The children of Rhigos had an opportunity to impart their

views about their school of which they are passionate about. The School Councils of Hirwaun and Rhigos were also consulted. The Director confirmed that the power point presentation delivered in the school was included and summarised in the consultation report for Cabinet's consideration.

The Director highlighted some concerns that have been raised in respect of the aims of the proposal are contrary to the aims of another proposal being consulted upon by the Council i.e. The Home to School Transport and Breakfast Clubs (2.8 miles away from Hirwaun and Rhigos Primary school with no direct impact on eligibility of children accessing home to school transport and the latter having been addressed in Scrutiny and Cabinet).

The decision to proceed in the absence of incomplete data has been raised as a concern, the Director advised that valid data has been provided to Cabinet Members in accordance to Welsh Government's requirements which have been outlined in the School Organisation Code. The Director added that the condition survey information is less than 5 years old and between £170-180K has been invested in the school to make it warm, safe and watertight. She added that the Estyn Inspection information was also less than five years old and the most recent undertaken, the pupil number data is based on class data as well as actual numbers attending both schools. The Director commented that pupil projections is based on the approved method of calculating data based on using live birth data for nursery placements as well as cohort survival method from reception to year six which is a good and reliable source of predicting future numbers within the school.

With regards to alternative options put forward by consultees to address the surplus places in the schools, the Director advised that careful consideration has been given to all possible options which are referenced in the documentation provided to Cabinet. The recommendation made by officers remains valid with no amendments and the Director added that the recommendation that the proposal progresses to the next phase remains in place.

In terms of a more comprehensive understanding of the potential impact, both positive and negative has been covered in all the risk assessments and have been included in the consultation documents and all the documents written in full compliance with the school organisation code. The Director alluded to the feedback from the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee held on the 14th December and a concern raised that it was not included in the Cabinet report which was considered at its meeting held on the 18th December. She confirmed that the feedback was received prior to the Cabinet meeting, and Cabinet Members sought further clarification to the feedback at its meeting (which was minuted and is on public record and available to view on the Council website).

In conclusion, the Director reiterated that Rhigos primary is the smallest school in RCT with diminishing pupil numbers over the next 5 years, with pupil numbers at 49 (from 51 as previously recorded since the commencement of the consultation period). She added that the reduction in pupil numbers would impact on the future viability of the school and on the Childrens' education in the future due to the financial challenges.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language addressed Committee and commented that the passion in the Rhigos area for their young people, is a shared passion as everyone wants the best outcomes for the young people of RCT. He felt confident that the Director of Education has

responded fully to the seven areas outlined in the call-in. The Cabinet Member reminded Committee that the LA is under direction from Welsh Government to review surplus spaces in schools across the region and he added that not to do so would be a dereliction of its role as an authority. He commented that the proposals before Cabinet had been fully scrutinised at every stage and they have challenged the data and rationale as provided by officers. The Cabinet Member felt confident that the data and rationale are robust and accurate and the consultation has been fair and accurate.

The Cabinet Member described his role as one that holds Senior Officers to account and he is confident that this has been undertaken, likewise that Scrutiny has had the opportunity to review the proposals and provided their input to Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member concluded that the decision to close Rhigos Primary School is not an easy one, he felt that an easier decision would be not to take action at all but failure to take action when the pupil numbers are dropping would have a detrimental impact on the school and its ability to deliver the curriculum for Wales, especially considering the correlation between pupil numbers and funding. He added that Hirwaun school is a brand new 21st Century School with the very best facilities and which complies with the 2010 Equality Act. The Cabinet Member commented that, as previously mentioned, the Estyn response to the proposal should provide some reassurance.

The Chair acknowledged the emotive issue of the call-in before Members and asked the Director to respond further to the Estyn report and sought clarification on the process for advising Cabinet around Scrutiny's deliberation.

The Director responded that Estyn has to consider the requirements of the School Organisation Code and she acknowledged that the response from Estyn was a positive one and they did not find that the proposal (which included all the evidence) would have an adverse impact on the quality of the children's education. The Estyn Inspection reports confirmed that both schools are accessing core support not enhanced support from the School Improvement Services.

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communication provided advice regarding that the comments of the Education & Inclusion Services Scrutiny Committee which had been circulated to Cabinet on Friday, 15th December (having been approved by the Chair of the Committee) in advance of its consideration of the proposals at its meeting on the 18th December, which satisfies the robust mechanism in place regarding Scrutiny's feedback to inform Cabinet's deliberations. In terms of public scrutiny, the public had the opportunity to access the recording which was live directly following the conclusion of the proceedings of the scrutiny committee and there were a number of references to the scrutiny feedback by Cabinet on the 18th December.

49 URGENT BUSINESS

50 CHAIRS REVIEW AND CLOSE

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh

This meeting closed at 11.55 am

**Councillor J Edwards
Chair.**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2022-2027 COMMITTEE
Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee held on Monday,
29 January 2024 at 5.00 pm

This meeting was recorded, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

**County Borough Councillors – The following Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee
Councillors were present online:**

Councillor J Edwards (Chair)

Councillor B Stephens	Councillor M Ashford
Councillor R Bevan	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor R Davis	Councillor S Evans
Councillor S Evans	Councillor S Morgans
Councillor G L Warren	Councillor M Powell
Councillor S Emanuel	

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mr M Veale

Officers in attendance:-

Mr P Mee, Chief Executive
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director, Finance and Performance
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director Democratic Services and Communications
Ms L Lawson, Performance Manager
Mrs S Daniel, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Mr J Rae, WLGA
Ms L Haywood, WLGA

Apologies for absence

Councillor K Morgan

1 Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the code of conduct no declarations of interest were made pertaining to the agenda.

2 Minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 13 December 2023.

3 Consultation Links

The Principal Scrutiny Officer advised of the open consultations and reminded

Members if they had any queries that they should contact the scrutiny team.

4 Welsh Government Consultation: A Fairer Council Tax

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented the report to Members which invited them to formally respond to phase 2 of Welsh Government's [consultation](#) which sets out the proposals for a Fairer Council Tax system in Wales. He advised that the proposals aim to rebalance wealth and tackle inequality and create a tax system that is fair for everyone and connects people with communities.

The Chairperson welcomed John Rae and Lisa Haywood from the WLGA who were in attendance to provide an overview of the proposals and to answer any questions that Members had in relation to the proposals.

Following conclusion of presentation of the proposals, the Chair sought comments and questions from Members which are summarised below:

A number of Members fed back that whilst change is required to create a fairer system, it was considered that implementation of council tax reform from 2025 is too soon, with the consequences and impacts not being fully understood and the need for further public awareness and engagement. Members also highlighted the need for a clearer understanding of how proposed reforms would impact on local authority funding as a result of changes in the tax base and the consequential impact on the level of funding raised through council tax and allocated via the Revenue Support Grant, and specific reference was made to the limitations for Rhondda Cynon Taf due to its local tax base. A consistent theme fed back was the need to do it right and do it properly.

Members asked that when a new system is determined, regular, clear and concise information is communicated to residents so they are fully aware of how they will be affected by the implementation and what it will mean for them financially, this being even more important due to the on-going cost of living crisis. Members also urged that residents are notified well in advance of any changes being implemented to allow them to prepare financially.

A number of Members were disappointed with the content of the Welsh Government consultation material and fed back that they did not feel it provided sufficient information to ensure the public and stakeholders were fully informed; therefore, there was a risk that consultees may not be able to provide meaningful feedback on the consultation questions. Specific information was fed back in this regard to aid future public engagement through providing illustrative examples of what the financial impact could be for an average household per tax band. Members highlighted that Welsh Government should provide further opportunities for engagement on the proposed reforms.

Members raised a number of concerns in relation to the re-valuation of the tax bands, particularly Band A at £112,000, which will result in many residents in the Rhondda Cynon Taf area being pushed into a new Band B tax band. Members were concerned that this will place additional financial pressure on residents who are already struggling with the costs of everyday living. Members urged that the proposed valuations are reconsidered and when valuations on homes are undertaken, the rationale for new tax bands are clearly communicated.

In discussing the three options, a number of Members remained concerned that there would still be an in-built unfairness in this system, and that an opportunity was again being missed to fundamentally reform this area. Members also expressed concern on the additional cost burden these proposals could create for properties of higher value and questioned the principle of connecting property values with households' ability to pay. An example was given that property values in the south of the County Borough are consistently higher than those in north, and that in many cases this can mean that working families have less disposable income in these areas. Some Members highlighted the need for Welsh Government to consider researching council tax systems operated in other parts of Europe. Members also noted that any future revaluations, that include social housing, could mean that properties are allocated to a higher Council Tax banding and therefore result in creating additional financial pressures and barriers for families looking to access the property ladder in the future, with some families also becoming eligible for Council Tax Reduction Scheme support.

Following conclusion, it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Authorise the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications to submit feedback to Welsh Government on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5 'WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES'-THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2024-2030

The Performance Manager presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to pre-scrutinise and help to shape the new draft Corporate Plan for 2024/25 – 2029/30. The draft Plan provides a Vision for the County Borough in 2024 and sets out four draft Well-being Objectives and priorities for the following six years. The Performance Manager continued that the new draft Corporate Plan 2024-2030, seeks to build on the progress of the previous Corporate Plan(s) and has revisited its Vision, Purpose and Ambitions for the County Borough.

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Chief Executive sought feedback on the draft Plan from Members of the Committee, specifically in relation to its Vision and the four Well-being objectives. Following the conclusion of the presentation, the Chair thanked the officers for the information and invited feedback and observations from Members which is summarised below:

Vision

Members agreed with the proposed Vision statement, which they considered demonstrates ambition, but also highlights the challenges the Council face. The Committee suggested strengthening inclusivity within the Vision by the inclusion of the word "All" at the beginning of the statement.

Well-being Objective – People and Communities

Members were pleased to see that school attendance is referenced with the actions as this is high on the agenda for the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also considered that there needed to be more explicit reference to Child Poverty within the Plan as well as a need to build aspiration for communities and young people in particular.

Members raised concerns at the use of hyperlinks throughout the Plan and recommended that the use of these are reviewed and used only where necessary to ensure the plan is accessible and easy for the public to read and understand.

Well-being Objective - Work and Business

Members expressed their broad support for the objective but raised concerns more widely, at the lack of apprenticeships available. Members urged that the availability of apprenticeships is reviewed to ensure that placements are available to inspire people to train and secure skilled work after college. There was also concern that the current national apprenticeship schemes are inflexible, which in turn deters smaller businesses which could offer a shared opportunity from offering placements. Members also indicated that they would like to see reference to high skilled work and also supporting people into rewarding career paths and not just jobs.

Members highlighted the traffic issues across the County Borough, including the Town centres and stated that communities need to be well connected with improved infrastructure and accessible, affordable public transport. Members also noted the value in local opportunities for residents to shop in smaller local retail areas, not just the focus on Town Centres.

Well-being Objective – Nature and the Environment

The Committee highlighted the issues the Council faced with increased problems with litter and fly tipping throughout the whole of the County Borough and its unsightliness. The Committee sought stronger wording throughout the Plan to highlight the importance of the public taking responsibility for disposing of their rubbish. They also recommended that there needs to be more education around the dangers and health impacts of litter, and noted the good work currently taking place in school projects with Waste Services. The Committee was keen to ensure cleaner streets across RCT and pride in our communities.

Well-being Objective – Culture and Heritage

Members emphasised the significance of the rich industrial heritage and also earlier history e.g. Iron Age, of Rhondda Cynon Taf and would like to see this considered throughout the Plan.

Members were invited to provide additional feedback directly to the Chief Executive or Performance Manager or directly through 'Let's Talk about What Matters' on the Council's Engagement Platform.

Additional comments

Members noted the stark health statistics in the data sections of the Plan both now and in the future, for health conditions particularly for obesity, not just RCT but UK wide. They indicated that they would like to see more emphasis on the Council's partnership working, particularly with the Local Health Board and the existing health initiatives, e.g. Health Weight Wales etc. to demonstrate how the Authority is working to address these concerns.

Members also acknowledged the range and scale of challenges identified by the data.

Members noted the volume of data within the Plan but also noted that this needs

to be utilised to inform work on the plan moving forward. Whilst acknowledging that the Plan contained the 'what' will be delivered, there was also a need to be clear about 'how' the priorities will be delivered, which in turn will help to identify the Outcomes.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Form a view on the draft Corporate Plan 2024-30 and whether it sets out:
 - A clear vision and purpose for the Council.
 - The right priorities/Well-being Objectives for the Council, namely
 - Ø People and Communities
 - Ø Work and Business
 - Ø Nature and the Environment and
 - Ø Culture and Heritage.
 - The principal actions within each priority/Well-being Objective that will have the greatest impact to achieve the new Vision.
2. Consider whether the plan is sufficiently ambitious and balanced given the financial challenges facing the Council both now and in the future.
3. Note the wide ranging engagement activity currently being undertaken.

Note the strengthened alignment with the Sustainable Development principle as required by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

6 LOCAL AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK

The Chief Executive provided an overview of the work undertaken by the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Group and requested elected Members to scrutinise and comment on the new draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy. Members were reminded that the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy is subject to review every three years to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and to reflect developments in legislation or best practice.

The Chief Executive indicated that the policy has been reviewed against the Welsh Government and WLGA Corporate Safeguarding Good Practice Guide and reflects input on current safeguarding best practice from professionals working across the Council, including Children's Services, Adult Services, Human Resources, Procurement, Digital & ICT and others.

In conclusion, the Chief Executive advised that arising from the review, the Council has revised and strengthened arrangements in a new draft Policy set out in Appendix 1 for Member's consideration.

A Member referenced the number of staff respondents in the survey and requested feedback on what percentage this represents compared to the total number of staff within the Council. The Member also raised concerns around the Council's Corporate Safeguarding responsibilities in relation to lone working which now extends to office workers as well as those who worked alone in their day to day role prior to the pandemic and noted that any potential delay to lone

working policy and training may have safeguarding implications for staff.

The Chief Executive advised that every effort was made to ensure the survey was distributed and accessible to all staff, with just under 1,000 staff completing the survey compared to total staff numbers of approximately 10,500, and noted that of the staff that did respond a high proportion of staff fed back that they had a good level of understanding of safeguarding. The Chief Executive thanked the Member for the comments on lone working and assured the Committee that as part of on-going monitoring arrangements this will be picked up through Corporate Safeguarding Steering Group meetings. The Member raised a supplementary point specifically in relation to schools and the Chief Executive advised that a significant proportion of the 10,500 total staff numbers are school based, safeguarding checks are undertaken as part of internal audit visits to schools and the feedback from which is collated and fed back to the Corporate Safeguarding Steering Group.

A Member asked how the new arrangements will be communicated to schools to ensure they consider and incorporate the latest guidance within their own policies. The Chief Executive advised that the Corporate Safeguarding Steering Group includes the Director of Education and Inclusion Services who has been involved in the review of the policy. The Chief Executive added that subject to approval of the policy, this will be communicated across the Council, including schools, to raise awareness and ensure it is built into the local safeguarding policies of schools.

A Member referred to the Forms of Exploitation section in the report and referenced that Hate Crime is listed under this section, and indicated that this is not considered to be a form of exploitation or protected characteristic. The Chief Executive thanked the Member for the observations and fed back that further clarity would be sought on the points highlighted.

Following conclusion of discussions, it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Scrutinise the Council's corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children and adults at risk including the new draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy, and
2. Scrutinise the new Delivery Plan for 2023-25 and progress to quarter 2, and

Request the Service Director for Democratic Services & Communications to provide Cabinet with the feedback of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in respect of the new draft Corporate Safeguarding Policy.

7 URGENT BUSINESS

8 Budget Consultation 2024-25 Phase 2

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented the report to Members to be consulted on and for the Committee to formally respond to the second phase of the Council's 2024-25 Budget Consultation.

The Service Director advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to pre-scrutinise the draft 2024/25 Revenue Budget Strategy, as part

of the second phase of the 2024-25 Budget Consultation process.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services then gave a presentation to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered the following areas: Introduction – 2024/25 Draft Revenue Budget Strategy; The Council's Current Financial Position (2023/24); Phase 1 Budget Consultation – Headlines; Provisional Local Government Settlement 2024/25 – Headlines/Implications for Rhondda Cynon Taf; Cabinet Proposed Budget Strategy 2024/25; and Next steps and key dates.

A Member was pleased to see that 63% of respondents to the phase 1 budget consultation process fed back that the Council should continue with its strategy on reserves, recognising that reserves cannot be used every year without being replenished.

A Member fed back that the number of responses to the first phase of the consultation seemed disproportionate in comparison to the number of people living in Rhondda Cynon Taf and asked if there was an opportunity to learn from this and use different engagement strategies.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services indicated that the Council considers its arrangements on an ongoing basis to learn lessons, with a comprehensive approach to engagement in place that includes face-to-face events in town centre locations, engagement with third sector partners and schools, and also through the use of social media.

A Member asked if the Council are doing enough to educate people on the work of the Council, so they can better understand its finances, how funds are spent and its different functions.

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services fed back that the Council aims to make available information to aid residents' understanding of the Council's finances and where it spends public money, and provided examples in the form of an easy read guide produced for budget consultation purposes; a leaflet included within Council Tax notices to residents that provides a breakdown on the Council's budget and how it is spent and also how the Council is funded; and engaging directly with school-based learners through consultation processes. The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications added that the number of consultees referenced in the presentation does not reflect on-going communication activity the Council undertakes via its social media channels and noted that a number of separate public consultation processes have also been undertaken in recent months linked to the budget setting process that have received high levels of engagement from the public.

A Member asked if demographic information in relation to individuals responding to the budget consultation was available to analyse. The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services fed back that this information is captured and can be used to inform on-going consultation arrangements.

A Member of the Committee commented that whilst increasing Council Tax is never popular and is a decision that is not taken lightly, the Council also need to ensure the necessary funding is in place to provide a wide range of vital services to our residents.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Pre-scrutinise the draft 2024/25 Revenue Budget Strategy as part of phase 2 of the Council's 2024-25 Budget Consultation.
2. Request the Service Director for Democratic Services & Communications to provide Cabinet with the feedback of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

9 Chairs Review and Close

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their attendance at the meeting and for their thorough contributions.

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh

This meeting closed at 7.36 pm

**Councillor J Edwards
Chair.**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26TH FEBRUARY 2024

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author: Lisa Howell, 21st Century School Organisation and Business Manager

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the implementation and the progress of the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022–2032.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the progress made since the previous update.
- 2.2 Consider the actions contained within the appended Annual Work Plan and note the subsequent feedback received from Welsh Government.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The WESP is a key priority for the Council and is the strategy for increasing and improving the planning of the provision of Welsh medium education in RCT to enable all learners in our communities to develop their Welsh language skills and assist with Welsh Government vision of one million Welsh speakers by 2050.
- 3.2 The WESP underpins the Council's approach to achieving the ambitious target set to increase the percentage of year one learners in Welsh medium education by 10% over a 10 year period.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation(Wales) Act 2013 requires a local authority to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and outlines that a plan must contain:
- A: A local authority proposals on how it will carry out its education functions;
 - Improve the planning of the provision of education through the medium of Welsh in its area; and,
 - Improve the standards of Welsh medium education and of the teaching of Welsh in its area.
 - B: The local authority targets for improving the planning of the provision of Welsh medium education in its area and reports on the progress made to meet the targets contained in the previous Plan or previous revised Plan.
- 4.2 Following Cabinet permission to consult on the WESP, the Council welcomed the opportunity to engage and participate with a wide range of stakeholders during the statutory consultation process. Following its conclusion, on 13th December 2021, Cabinet approved the draft WESP prior to it being submitted to Welsh Government for final approval in January 2022. The WESP became a formal and adopted strategic document in September 2022.
- 4.3 In order to meet the ambitious overarching target of the WESP by 2032, the Council, along with external partnership organisations who collectively form the WESP Steering Group, continue to work collaboratively to ensure success.
- 4.4 The WESP Steering Group is chaired by the Director of Education with each member of the Senior Management Team in the Education Directorate having responsibility for leading the work on each of the seven outcomes associated with the WESP. This is achieved through the work of the seven WESP Sub-Groups, which has included the co-construction of the action plan and moving forward, its effective delivery and review. The WESP Sub-Groups have been established to provide an effective focus for the Directorate, in partnership with external groups and organisations, to deliver on the 10 year plan with the aim of achieving the overarching goal of significantly increasing the number of learners in Welsh medium education by 2032.
- 4.5 There has been good engagement from our partners in the WESP Steering Group and the seven WESP Sub-Groups. This has included participation from a range of Directorates across the Council, external organisations, early years provisions, English and Welsh medium schools, and further education providers.
- 4.6 Outcomes from each of the seven WESP Sub-Groups contributed to the annual Work Plan as well as a draft five-year Work Plan. The draft five-year Work Plan was submitted to Welsh Government on 17th December 2022 and positive feedback was received.
- 4.7 A process for monitoring progress against the Work Plan has been established to ensure that we remain on target. The Annual Work Plan is intended to be a practical working document to ensure effective delivery of the WESP in the shorter term.

- 4.8 The Council is required to review the WESP each year and submit to Welsh Government an Annual Review Report capturing the key achievements for that year. A copy of the Annual Review Report is included in Appendix 1. An Annual Review Report will be provided to Members annually.

5. UPDATE / CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 The Council's Annual Review Report for year one of the WESP was submitted to Welsh Government for consideration on 31st July 2023.
- 5.2 Feedback from Welsh Government on the report was received on 14th November 2023. The feedback received was largely positive, a full copy of the response is contained within Appendix 2.
- 5.3 There has been further notable progress made in a number of areas since the report was prepared and submitted to Welsh Government in July 2023, and these are listed below.

Outcome 1

- 5.4 Following submission of two capital funding bids to Welsh Government for development proposals to increase Welsh medium childcare provision for Penderyn and YGG Castellau, a sum of £840k has been approved by Welsh Government for Penderyn. The funding decision from Welsh Government for YGG Castellau is still awaited.

As part of the Flying Start expansion, of the total number of 563 Flying Start places offered since April 2023, 90 (18%) have opted for Welsh medium Flying Start provision. This is a notable increase and a positive step forward to increasing the numbers accessing provision.

Outcome 2

- 5.5 The Council's Welsh Language Immersion Service 'Taith Iaith' officially welcomed learners from September 2023. At the end of term (December 2023), a total of 11 learners across seven different schools were accessing support. The immersion team were at full capacity at the end of the Autumn term, however as some learners were expected to finish the bespoke programme by Christmas, new spaces are now available. The immersion teacher has been gathering feedback from those parents accessing the service, as well as from staff at the relevant schools. Feedback received has been incredibly positive, which has been echoed by some of the teachers who attend the WESP Steering Group during recent meetings.

Outcome 3

- 5.6 On the whole, the transition rates between Welsh medium primary and Welsh medium secondary education across the County Borough are positive, however there are certain areas where higher numbers are transitioning to the nearest English medium secondary school. The Head of Service Transformation and Data Systems has met, or is due to meet, with each separate school cluster to discuss the data in further detail with the respective schools.

Outcome 4

- 5.7 Contact has been made with the Hen Felin Training Centre who deliver childcare qualifications in the Rhondda area, to gather further information on the courses they offer at the centre. Although they don't offer courses through the medium of Welsh, they do have a Welsh speaking assessor who can liaise and support students. The assessors actively support Welsh speaking students onto placements in Welsh medium settings with the hope of retaining work in this field. This is a positive step to addressing some of the concerns relating to difficulties recruiting Welsh medium childcare practitioners.

Outcome 5

- 5.8 All schools in RCT continue to work towards achieving the bronze, silver or gold Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus award, which is awarded to schools for increasing the use of Welsh outside of the classroom, in line with the relevant criteria. CSCJES lead on this programme. A total of five Welsh medium primary schools and two English medium primary schools have achieved the gold award and completed the programme. All other schools continue to work towards achieving their respective awards. There are two English medium secondary schools yet to engage with provision, CSCJES are targeting these schools to encourage uptake with provision.

Within the Annual Review Report, there's information relating to the first fully Welsh leisure club in RCT which was established during the summer. At the time of submitting the Annual Review Report, the club had submitted an application for funding and has since received confirmation that they have been successful in securing just over £2,000 of funding from the Sport Wales Be Active grant. Work around this continues and further updates will follow in due course.

Outcome 6

- 5.9 The new Welsh medium LSC provision for Key Stage 3 and 4 learners with ALN at Ysgol Garth Olwg opened to learners from September 2023.

The Council have recently consulted on the establishment of two new Welsh medium primary phase LSCs in the new Welsh medium school YGG Awel Taf which will open to learners from September 2024.

Outcome 7

- 5.10 The Council's Workforce Development team have been creating a 'Teaching as a Profession' section of the Council's new career portal. Wording for the website has been finalised, the design team are currently finalising the production of footage to be used on the website and across social media campaigns.

Marketing

- 5.11 In October 2023, a social media marketing campaign was launched across the Council's corporate social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter). The

campaign specifically targeted promoting Welsh medium education with the use of videos shared by Welsh Government and Mudiad Meithrin. The campaign ran for 10 weeks, the statistics of the campaign will now be evaluated to inform future campaigns.

An Eisteddfod Schools Working Party has been established. Working alongside officers from the Eisteddfod team, the working group will serve as an opportunity for schools to engage directly with the Eisteddfod through sharing good practice and collaborating on activities to fundraise and raise awareness of the Eisteddfod ahead of its arrival in August 2024.

In December 2023, with the support of Ysgol Llanhari, a funding application was submitted to Cronfa Glyndwr to secure funding towards the creation of a Welsh medium education promotional video. We were successful in securing the funding, the Council's WESP Officer will now work with Ysgol Llanhari, WESP partners and internal officers to plan and produce a video specific to RCT.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (with Social-Economic Duty) for the WESP has been completed and presented to both the Review Panel and Cabinet, this document has been reviewed and remains valid.
- 6.2 In summary, the Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment identifies both positive and neutral impacts, and no negative impacts upon protected characteristics.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment for the proposed WESP has been developed and previously presented to both the Review Panel and Cabinet, this document has been reviewed and remains valid.
- 7.2 Recognising the importance of 'Cymraeg 2050', and how essential the education system is to achieving its vision, the WESP sets out the Council's ten-year plan for increasing and improving the planning of provision for Welsh medium and Welsh language education. It builds on the work of the previous WESP for the period between 2017 to 2022 and sets out a plan demonstrating how the Council intends to achieve its ten-year vision.

8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 A comprehensive public statutory consultation was undertaken between Monday 13th September 2021 to Monday 8th November 2021. The feedback provided via this consultation has been incorporated into the approved WESP for 2022-32.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 The following legislation/regulations are aligned to this report:

- 1) Section 84 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.
- 2) The WESP (Wales) Regulations 2019.
- 3) The WESP (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020.

11. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES / WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

11.1 The WESP links to the Council's Corporate Plan for the period between 2020 to 2024, specifically the priority:

- Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper:
 - Ensuring we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education.

11.2 The delivery of the WESP will contribute to all seven wellbeing goals listed within the Future Generation (Wales) Act. In addition, due regard has been made to the Five Ways of Working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

12. CONCLUSION

12.1 In order to meet the target by 2032, the Council, along with external partners and representatives who form the WESP Steering Group and WESP Sub-Groups, must work collectively to achieve this ambitious goal. The WESP Sub-Groups will continue to work collaboratively to implement the actions identified within the Work Plan with the aim of successfully achieving the key targets.

12.2 The Council remains committed to ensuring the availability of Welsh medium education and will continue to support and encourage transition from the initial early years through to primary and secondary education before progressing through to higher and further education, so that all learners whatever their learning needs are able to access Welsh medium provision. This is in line with Welsh Government's vision to create one million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050 as set out in 'Cymraeg 2050'.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26TH FEBRUARY 2024

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author: Lisa Howell, 21st Century School Organisation and Business Manager

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ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2023

Name of Local Authority

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough

Author:	Hannah Bebb, Graduate Officer, in Partnership with Senior Officers within the Education Directorate
Approver:	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Date	31.7.23

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS / HIGHLIGHTS

Flying Start Expansion

Since the introduction of the new 'Flying Start Approved Provider List' model, Flying Start colleagues have been working with Mudiad Meithrin to increase the number of Welsh medium providers on this list. Since the beginning of this academic year, 7 additional providers have joined the 'Approved Provider' list. A total of 125 Welsh medium Flying Start childcare places were taken this year, 56 of these places were taken up following the roll out of the expansion areas.

Development of Welsh medium education throughout the County Borough

Works have been completed on the school site of YGG Aberdar in the Cynon area to deliver a new sessional childcare facility providing an additional 30 registered places, and an extension to provide additional facilities and an additional 72 learner places at the school. Works have also been completed for YG Rhydywaun in the Cynon area to deliver an extension to increase capacity at the school. The brand new block on the school site opened to learners from September 2022 and created an additional 187 learner places at the school. In the Rhondda Fach area, capital funding has been secured to provide a brand new school for YGG Llyn y Forwyn. Work is progressing on the new school site to provide additional capacity, childcare facilities, and community use facilities to encourage the use of the language in the community. In the Taff Ely area of the county, the construction of the new Welsh medium school in Rhydyfelin has progressed successfully. The new school will be named Ysgol Awel Taf and is on target to open to learners from September 2024 as planned.

Welsh Language Immersion

In the spring term, the Local Authority successfully recruited a specialist teacher plus 2 learning support assistants to deliver Welsh language immersion to learners who are latecomers to Welsh medium education. The immersion teacher prepared a delivery plan for the roll out of the provision and successfully received funding to purchase resources. The team started to work with 3 learners from 3 separate schools from June 2023, this support will recommence from September when returning back to school for the next academic year. Two further learners have been recruited to commence support from September 2023.

Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus programme

CSCJES have been working closely with all schools in RCT to support them in achieving bronze, silver, and gold awards. There are now 5 Welsh medium primary schools who've received the gold award and 1 Welsh medium secondary school has received the silver award. There are 40 English medium primary schools who've received the bronze award with 10 going on to receive the silver and 2 have received the gold award. A total of 5 English medium secondary schools have received the bronze award and 3 English medium special schools/units have received the bronze award.

Increasing Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision

Following difficulties with recruiting specialist staff, we have now successfully recruited staff for the new Welsh medium LSC provision for Key Stage 3 and 4 learners at Ysgol Garth Olwg. The provision will open to learners from September 2023. Actions undertaken to review the

sufficiency of Welsh medium ALN provision in RCT have highlighted identified areas of need for development. As a result, the proposals for the establishment of Welsh medium ALN provision in the new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin have been brought forward. Consultation is currently underway and if successful, 2 new Welsh medium primary phase LSCs will be established at the new school.

OVERALL PLAN SUMMARY

The overarching target of our WESP is to increase the percentage of year one learners being taught through the medium of Welsh in RCT by 10% over the duration of the plan to increase the percentage to 30%. The data in the table below is derived from PLASC and demonstrates the number of year one learners attending Welsh medium primary schools over the previous five academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. The data demonstrates that the number of year one learners attending Welsh medium primary schools this year has decreased by 3 learners which is not a cause for concern at present. The impact of the interventions we are and will be delivering will take time to embed, so this will continue to be monitored closely each year as we move through the ten year plan.

Table A

Total Number of Year One Learners Attending Welsh Medium Primary Schools Over the Previous Five Academic Years					
Year Group	Academic Year				
	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Year One	537	506	544	524	521

In order to reach our goal of increasing the percentage of learners by 10% by the year 2032, our targets for the next ten years are set out below. Please note, these are our projected target figures based off the overarching target of increasing the number of year one learners from 524 to 795, so the increase may not always follow a linear trend as depicted in the table below.

Table B

Target Number and % of Year One Learners Receiving Their Education Through the Medium of Welsh									
2022 - 2023		2023 - 2024		2024 - 2025		2025 - 2026		2026 - 2027	
524	20%	556	21%	583	22%	609	23%	636	24%
2027 - 2028		2028 - 2029		2029 - 2030		2030 - 2031		2031 - 2031	
662	25%	689	26%	715	27%	742	28%	795	30%

When comparing the actual data with the projected data, although the actual number is slightly less than the projected number, as this is such a small difference it has not been assessed as a red rating. As we have not had an increase in the number it would not be appropriate to rate our progress as green, therefore we have determined that the rating of progress against our overarching target is at amber for the first year of the plan.

The first year of the WESP has provided the foundations for building constructive working relationships amongst internal and external officers, partners, groups, and organisations who contribute towards the WESP. We have made a good start to working towards achieving the targets set out in the WESP and we are progressing well across all outcomes. An increase in opportunities to communicate in Welsh in both Welsh and English medium schools has been seen during this year and we have proactively marketed the benefits of being bilingual and Welsh medium education through distribution of the Local Authority's Being Bilingual booklets and through making amendments to the authority's corporate website. We have facilitated continued investment in Welsh medium provision to deliver significant investment to improve and provide modern educational facilities for Welsh medium schools in RCT and we continue to do so as we move forward with the WESP.

A self-assessment has been conducted to rate our progress against each outcome of the WESP. Some outcomes have had more successes than others as can be seen in the detailed report that follows. When taking a balanced view of the WESP, although some outcomes could achieve a green rating, on the whole we would give ourselves an orange rating after the first year of delivery.

FOREWARD LOOK MILESTONES

Implement a marketing campaign:

During this first year, we have liaised with colleagues from the Local Authority's Marketing team to identify the key officers with responsibility for different elements of marketing. A communications strategy has been prepared and a marketing strategy is currently in development, to be implemented from September 2023. This strategy will incorporate all elements of the WESP to ensure we are proactively marketing and promoting Welsh medium education. We will work closely with WESP stakeholders and the Southeast Wales Welsh Language Education Champion to ensure effective marketing and promotion of Welsh education in RCT.

Develop Welsh Language Immersion provision:

The immersion service has recently been established, working with learners since June 2023. Promoting this service will be a key priority during year 2 of the WESP to ensure its profile is widely raised so that parents/carers are aware of the support available for learners who are latecomers to the language. As we progress through the year, we will continually review the provision and its structure to ensure its fit for purpose to fully immerse learners in the language. The demand for the service will be monitored throughout the year to assess any changes in demand for the service and to evaluate the impact of the service on learners who have accessed support.

Deliver significant investment to improve and provide modern educational facilities for Welsh medium schools, to include:

- Progress with construction of a new Welsh medium school in Rhydyfelin.
- Progress with construction of a new Welsh medium school for YGG Llyn y Forwyn.
- Progress with development options for YG Cwm Rhondda.
- If consultation is successful, progress with proposals for 2 new Welsh medium primary phase LSCs in the new Welsh medium school in Rhydyfelin.
- If funding is received, progress with proposals for childcare and early years developments for YGG Castellau and YGG Penderyn.

Strengthen links between schools at local universities to increase the number of teaching staff able to teach through the medium of Welsh:

During the first year of the WESP, we've collaborated with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to promote the initiatives they are running aimed at encouraging students into Welsh medium teaching positions. We will continue to work with the Coleg to strengthen links. A key priority will be to bring together representatives from the Coleg, local universities and our Welsh medium secondary schools to encourage school aged learners to consider teaching as a career pathway and to support those considering these pathways. We also aim to strengthen the promotion of working within education in RCT through improved information and signposting on our website.

Outcome 1

More nursery children/ three year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh

KEY ANNUAL DATA

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Data

The data in the table that follows is derived from the latest CIW list of registered and unregistered settings known to the Family Information Service (FIS). It demonstrates the total number of registered and unregistered Welsh and English medium childcare and early years settings alongside the number of places available in RCT.

Table 1.1

Total Number of Welsh and English Medium Childcare and Early Years Settings Available in RCT					
Childcare Type		Total No. of Registered Settings	Total No. of Places	Total No. of Unregistered Settings	Total No. of Places
Childminder		98	789	0	0
Day Care	Full Day Care	64	2,283	0	0
	Sessional Day Care	22	575	2	Unknown
	Crèches	0	0	0	0
	Out of School Care	13	530	5	Unknown
	Open Access Play Provision	5	290	2	Unknown
	Nanny	2	0	0	0
Total		204	4,467	9	0

The data in the table that follows, again derived from the latest CIW list of registered and unregistered settings known to FIS, demonstrates the total number of registered and unregistered Welsh medium childcare and early years settings (both Welsh medium and bilingual) alongside the number of places available in RCT.

Table 1.2

Total Number of Welsh Medium Childcare and Early Years Settings Available in RCT					
Childcare Type		Total No. of Registered Settings	Total No. of Places	Total No. of Unregistered Settings	Total No. of Places
Childminder		1	25	0	0
Day Care	Full Day Care	20	634	0	0
	Sessional Day Care	6	154	0	0
	Creches	0	0	0	0
	Out of School Care	3	120	3	Unknown
Total		30	933	3	0

PLASC Data

The data in the table below is derived from PLASC and outlines the number of pre-nursery, pre-nursery part-time, nursery and nursery part-time learners attending Welsh medium primary schools for the previous four academic years up to and including 2022-2023. The data for this academic year shows an increase in the numbers attending pre-nursery and pre-nursery part-time however the numbers at nursery and nursery part-time have declined.

Table 1.3

Total Number of Pre-Nursery, Pre-Nursery Part Time, Nursery and Nursery Part Time Learners Attending Welsh Medium Primary Schools Over the Previous Four Academic Years				
Year Group	Academic Year			
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Pre-Nursery	27	26	18	23
Pre-Nursery Part Time	29	39	32	49
Nursery	406	437	366	359
Nursery Part Time	130	95	145	138
Total	592	597	561	569

The data in the table below, also derived from PLASC, outlines the number of pre-nursery, pre-nursery part-time, nursery and nursery part-time learners attending English medium primary schools for the previous four academic years up to and including 2022-2023.

Table 1.4

Total Number of Pre-Nursery, Pre-Nursery Part Time, Nursery and Nursery Part Time Learners Attending English Medium Primary Schools Over the Previous Four Academic Years				
Year Group	Academic Year			
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Pre-Nursery	95	206	165	160
Pre-Nursery Part Time	262	290	216	202
Nursery	1,311	1,540	1,436	1,430
Nursery Part Time	760	359	512	460
Total	2,428	2,395	2,329	2,252

This data demonstrates a decline in the total number of learners in English medium primary schools over the five year period, however this does not correlate with an increased number of learners attending Welsh medium primary schools as a result. Although an additional 8 learners were reported in Welsh medium schools for this academic year, a loss of 77 learners were reported in English medium schools. This indicates that the numbers accessing pre-nursery, pre-nursery part-time, nursery and nursery part-time are falling in general across RCT.

Mudiad Meithrin Data

At the beginning of the academic year, there were 19 Cylchoedd Meithrin in RCT. As of July 2023, there are now 20 Cylchoedd Meithrin in RCT following the opening of Cylch Meithrin Cilfynydd.

The data received by Mudiad Meithrin in the Autumn term for the academic year 2021-2022 demonstrates the total number of children who transitioned from a Cylch to primary education, the numbers transitioned into Welsh medium education and the numbers transitioned into English medium education. The data demonstrates some positives with some settings having majority of the children transferring into Welsh medium education, however there are some pockets of the County Borough where transition rates into English medium education is higher than the transition into Welsh medium education.

Recent sub-group and steering group meetings have highlighted concerns around the accuracy of this data as many settings now offer both Welsh and English medium sessions. This means that the total number of children being accounted for includes children accessing English medium provision via the settings who will naturally transition into English medium primary education. The Local Authority's Education Data Team are working with Mudiad Meithrin on a new 'Data Sharing Agreement' between the Local Authority and Welsh medium early years

settings in order to gather accurate data on the numbers accessing both Welsh and English medium sessions and the onward monitoring of where these children transition to.

Table 1.5

Cylch	Total No. Transitioned into School	No. Transitioned into Welsh Medium Education	No. Transitioned into English Medium Education
Aberdar	43	24	19
Beddau	25	25	0
Evan James	24	23	1
Llanilltud Faerdref	9	7	2
Penderyn	37	27	10
Pentre'r Eglwys	29	13	16
Rhydyfelin	17	12	5
Seren Fach	41	21	20
Ynysybwl	17	7	10
Abercynon	-	-	-
Bronllwyn	48	38	10
Bystedd Bach (Porth)	28	28	0
Cwm Elai	24	17	7
Glynrhedyn	11	10	1
Llanhari	26	14	12
Llantrisant	12	12	0
Nant Dyrys	32	26	6
Ynysir/Wattstown	64	27	37
Ysgol Dolau	6	6	0

There are currently 13 Cylchoedd Ti a Fi in RCT. The Headteacher of the new Welsh medium school in Rhydyfelin which is due to open in the next academic year, has been working with Mudiad Meithrin and RCT Childcare Development team to register the school to run Cylch Ti a Fi sessions from October 2023. This provision will continue once the new school opens to learners from September 2024.

Flying Start Data

Since the beginning of this academic year, the number of Welsh medium Flying Start childcare places taken were 125. Of this number, 56 childcare places were taken up following the roll out of the expansion areas. Welsh Medium places taken up also increased and 20% of the expansion places were in Welsh settings during Phase 2 of the expansion and this continues

to grow. This is as a direct result of having more Welsh approved providers and a wider geographical spread.

OUTCOME SUMMARY

Flying Start Expansion

The Flying Start team have continued to work with new childcare providers including childminders to enable them to become Flying Start Approved Providers to increase the choice of provision available and the number of Welsh medium Flying Start places available. This will assist the Local Authority with meeting the demand for places as part of the expansion and will also provide parents with a wider choice of settings to meet their childcare needs and language choice.

The Flying Start team are working closely with Mudiad Meithrin to increase Welsh medium provision across RCT to bring them on board the approved supplier list for Flying Start. At the beginning of this academic year, there were 14 Welsh medium Flying Start Approved Providers in RCT. As of July 2023, there are currently 21 approved providers and Welsh medium places taken up as part of the phase 2A expansion has increased by 20%.

The Flying Start team have also designed a leaflet (Flying Start Bilingual Journey) in partnership with Mudiad Meithrin which is now circulated to every new family when the child is 18 months old via the Family Health Visitor.

Information on the Availability of Welsh Medium Education Provision

The Local Authority's 'Being Bilingual' booklets is an effective way of providing parents/carers with information on Welsh medium education and provision as it covers a range of areas to include:

- The benefits of being bilingual
- Addresses common parental concerns around choosing Welsh medium education
- The journey from Cymraeg i Blant through to Higher Education
- List of Cylchoedd Meithrin in RCT along with contact details
- List of Welsh medium schools in RCT along with contact details
- Links through to additional support for parents/carers through partner organisations such as Cymraeg i Blant, Learn Welsh Cymru and Welsh4Parents.

During this academic year, the contact details for RCT schools were updated and as such, amendments were needed to reflect the changes in our booklets. The digital version of the booklet has been updated and replaced on the website and leaflet inserts with updated contact details have been designed and printed to be placed inside the physical copies of the booklets. Further amendments were made to the digital booklets to include narrative around the support now available via the Local Authority's newly established Welsh language immersion provision. The immersion teacher has worked with the Local Authority's Design team to design and create promotional leaflets which have been shared with all Welsh medium schools in RCT. Distribution of these leaflets will be extended to Cylchoedd Meithrin, along with the Being Bilingual booklets.

The Local Authority's Childcare Development and Education teams have attended local events such as Parti Ponty and the Teddy Bears Picnic to distribute booklets and leaflets to the general public, taking advantage of the opportunities to directly engage with parents/carers who may be considering Welsh medium education as an option for their child. Wider distribution of the booklets will be completed over the summer period to include RCT, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend birth registration services and Health Visitors.

A review of the Local Authority's corporate website has been undertaken and as a result a dedicated Welsh medium education page is now available to ensure options around Welsh medium education provision are available to parents/carers. This section of the website provides an overview of the benefits of being bilingual, links to finding your local Cylch Meithrin, links to finding schools in your catchment areas, and links through to organisations who can support to include Mudiad Meithrin, Learn Welsh Wales, Menter Iaith. This is the first step undertaken in reviewing our corporate website. During Year 2 of the WESP, further amendments to the website are planned to assist with the uptake of Welsh medium education.

During this academic year, FIS has launched a new platform which is a standalone website to the corporate website. The FIS officer is working with the Childcare Development team to incorporate changes to the new platform to include sections relating to Welsh medium childcare, early years, schools and learning. FIS team ensure the Dewis platform is regularly reviewed to ensure information available to parents/carers is as accurate as possible.

The Local Authority's School Admissions team post admissions deadline dates via corporate social media platforms, along with a message promoting Welsh medium education. This is now being done with each school admission application window. The School Admissions team closely monitor any in-year transfer requests to ensure these have been completed following the changes made to the in-year transfer process, which is detailed under Outcome 3. School Admissions officers have also received information around the late immersion provision which is promoted to any prospective parents/carers.

Partnership Working

The Local Authority's Childcare Development team offer support and guidance to childcare settings that would like to develop and expand their Welsh medium provision by offering business support, new/expansion of provision grants and signposting to relevant agencies, such as Mudiad Meithrin. Capital funding bids have recently been submitted to Welsh Government to expand and develop Welsh medium services in two areas of RCT. These bids were developed in collaboration with Mudiad Meithrin, Flying Start colleagues and the relevant Welsh medium schools. The outcome of these bids has not yet been decided.

Representatives from Cymraeg i Blant and Mudiad Meithrin have attended events such as Parti Ponty and the Teddy Bears Picnic to promote Welsh medium provision and the support available to parents/carers. A member of the Local Authority's Education team also attended the events to promote what's available locally through distribution of the Being Bilingual booklets along with Cymraeg i Blant and Mudiad Meithrin's own promotional materials. Mudiad Meithrin have created a compilation of promotional videos demonstrating the advantages of attending a Cylch Meithrin and choosing Welsh medium education. These resources, along with promotional resources received by Welsh Government, have been shared with the Local Authority's Marketing team to be promoted via the Local Authority's corporate social media platforms and with FIS to be promoted via their new website.

Cymraeg i Blant have recently appointed a new officer who will be commencing the role from September 2023. The officer will deliver Cymraeg i Blant sessions across the County Borough to include story and song time and baby yoga. We will work closely with the new officer to ensure these sessions are widely marketed and promoted to assist with uptake.

Planning of Welsh Medium Provision

The Local Authority's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) identified areas of RCT where future development is needed. As part of the CSA, mapping exercises were conducted which

identified geographical gaps in Welsh medium provision across RCT. Consultations conducted as part of the CSA identified that parents/carers in the Taf Ely area of RCT were most likely to require Welsh medium childcare. The Local Authority's Childcare Development team have met with Mudiad Meithrin and held conversations on the findings of these exercises. Further areas have been identified by Mudiad Meithrin through their own exercises which has been shared with the Childcare Development team. The findings of these exercises have identified areas of RCT where new developments are needed. These areas will be prioritised for development in partnership with Mudiad Meithrin during Year 2 of the WESP.

Promoting Access to Education Through the Medium of Welsh

Under section 10 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008, all Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide learners with access to education and training through the medium of Welsh. The Measure outlines that free transport to their nearest suitable school is provided if they reside beyond safe walking distance. The law relating to safe walking distance is defined as two miles for learners of compulsory school age receiving primary education and three miles for learners of compulsory school age receiving secondary education. The Local Authority has exercised the discretionary powers afforded to it under the Measure to make a more generous provision to learners, as set out below:

- The eligibility criterion for walking distance for learners receiving compulsory primary education at their nearest suitable school has been set at 1½ miles, instead of 2 miles.
- Free transport to the nearest suitable school, where places are available, is provided to learners who meet the ½ mile eligibility criterion from the start of the Foundation Phase (the start of the school term after their third birthday), rather than the start of compulsory education (the start of the school term after their fifth birthday).
- The eligibility criterion for walking distance for learners receiving compulsory secondary education at their nearest suitable school has been set at 2 miles instead of 3 miles.

The current policy is that learners attending the nearest Welsh medium or dual language school receive free transport in accordance with its agreed policy on walking distance and safe routes.

A review has been undertaken to identify the number of Welsh medium schools which do not currently have a Welsh medium early years setting co-located on the school site, or in close proximity to the school. The outcome of this review demonstrated that there are only 2 Welsh medium schools in RCT without a setting co-located, or in close proximity of the school. However, both of these schools have settings located within less than a mile of the school. We will continue to monitor the numbers attending these settings to ensure any notable changes in relation to the numbers attending and transitioning into primary education is monitored and actioned effectively.

The Local Authority's 21st Century Schools team continue to progress and deliver projects to facilitate growth for Welsh medium childcare and early years settings in RCT. During this academic year, work was completed on a new sessional childcare facility creating an additional 30 registered places at YGG Aberdar. The setting opened to learners from September 2022 and has been successful. The setting has already expanded their offer to include afternoon sessions due to high demand.

Plans for a new dedicated childcare facility to be built co-located on the new site of the new Welsh medium school at YGG Llyn y Forwyn have progressed during this academic year. Enablement works have begun on the site with construction expected to commence over the summer period. The Local Authority's Childcare Development team have already met with the childcare provider to explain the expectations for the new settings with regards to expanding

their provision and its promotion to new parents/carers. This support will be ongoing over Year 2 of the WESP.

Outcome 1 Sub-Group

A sub-group has been established to focus solely on each outcome of the WESP. The sub-groups provide an effective focus for the Local Authority in partnership with external groups and organisations. The sub-group have met virtually on a termly basis to review the actions listed on the Outcome 1 Annual Work Plan and provide updates on any progress made and to discuss next steps for actions, where appropriate. The sub-group meetings have provided opportunities to collaborate with partners such as Mudiad Meithrin, Cymraeg i Blant, RhAG and Menter Iaith as well as representatives from different school cluster groups. These meetings have strengthened partnership working and allowed for ideas to be shared amongst key partners to ensure planning of Welsh medium childcare provision in RCT is effective and co-ordinated.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

As referred to above, we have a dedicated group focussing solely on this outcome. The Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation leads this sub-group and membership includes internal officers, representation from Welsh medium primary schools, Health Visitors, and external partners to include Mudiad Meithrin, Cymraeg i Blant, RhAG, Menter Iaith and Dysgu Cymraeg.

The initial sub-group meetings held at the beginning of this academic year focussed on developing the work plan which details the overarching targets, the actions and the key activities required to achieve the targets. The Outcome 1 Sub-group meets on a termly basis to review the targets and actions listed on the work plan to provide an opportunity for members to provide updates on any progress made, where appropriate, and to identify ways to move forward with certain actions. These meetings have been held virtually and have had good levels of engagement. The sub-group lead will review end dates of actions on the work plan to ensure the group remains on targets and in situations where the end date has surpassed, questions will be asked as to why and follow on steps agreed upon to ensure we move forward and don't miss any targets. Following each meeting, minutes of the meeting are shared with members of the sub-group and the 'Progress/Evaluation' column on the work plan is updated with any comments made during the meeting.

OUTCOME LEVEL RISKS

- Recruitment of qualified Welsh medium staff to work in childcare and early years settings: Issues being faced at present with recruiting qualified Welsh medium staff. This is preventing some settings from offering further sessions as they do not have the staff to do this.
- Sustainability of settings:
New and current settings need to be sustainable if we are to encourage uptake amongst parents/carers. We need to consider where settings are being set up and how we're signposting parents/carers to Welsh medium opportunities.
- Falling birth rates across RCT:

The live birth information received from the Local Health Board indicates that birth rates in general are falling in RCT. This will impact both Welsh and English medium settings and our projected targets as we progress through the WESP.

- Flying Start expansion:

Some settings are reluctant to become approved providers due to concerns around the difficulty of the online procurement system which must be completed to become an approved provider.

- The closure of settings impacting school numbers:

For example, in the catchment area of YGG Ynyswen, there were previously 3 Cylchoedd Meithrin but now there's only 1 which is located next door to the school site. This has greatly impacted the numbers at the school which have halved following the closure of the other settings.

- The location of settings:

In line with the risk identified above, closure of other Cylchoedd within catchment areas can greatly impact the numbers at the school.

ASSURANCE / MITIGATION ACTION

- Recruitment of qualified Welsh medium staff to work in childcare and early years settings:
 - We need to find out where these types of jobs are being advertised the broaden the channels of advertising to include:
 - Education based job searching portals (for example, e-teach)
 - Social media groups – The Local Authority has a closed social media group for all childcare providers which can be used to promote job opportunities.
 - Schools' social media groups – advertise to parents/carers who may potentially be interested.
 - Engage with Welsh medium secondary schools, colleges and universities to support students to undertake the qualifications required for these posts.
 - Make working in the Welsh medium childcare sector more attractive – low pay offer, increasing responsibility and qualification requirements are hampering this. Intervention is needed at a national level if we're to make an impact.
- Sustainability of settings:
 - Continue to promote financial support for settings via the Local Authority, Welsh Government and Mudiad Meithrin grant schemes.
 - Be more proactive in signposting settings to business support for budget planning and marketing.
- Falling birth rates across RCT:
 - Mudiad Meithrin recently met with the Local Authority's Education Data team and discussed this in more detail. This data needs to be used more strategically to plan Welsh medium provision across the County Borough based on areas where births are occurring.

- Flying Start expansion:
 - The Flying Start team are working directly with settings to support them with going through the online procurement system. The team have visited various settings in RCT to help and have tried to make the process as straightforward as possible. The team are looking into the possibility of delivering workshops to settings to support them in becoming approved providers.

- The closure of settings impacting school numbers:
 - A co-ordinated approach is needed to plan out provision between the Local Authority's Childcare Development team and Mudiad Meithrin to plug the gaps in provision across RCT. The findings of mapping exercises to be used to inform areas of the County Borough where new provision is needed.

- The location of settings:
 - Almost every Welsh medium primary school in RCT has a setting co-located, or in close proximity, to the school.
 - Findings of mapping exercises to be used to identify other areas of school catchments where development of provision is needed to support an increase in numbers accessing Welsh medium primary education to make access to Welsh medium childcare and education as geographically convenient as possible.

Outcome 2

More reception class children/ five year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh

KEY ANNUAL DATA

PLASC Data

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and outlines the total number of primary school aged learners attending primary schools in RCT, split by Welsh and English medium for the previous five academic years up to and including 2022-2023. The data demonstrates that the split between the numbers attending Welsh medium and English medium primary schools has remained consistent over the previous five academic years.

Table 2.1

Total Number of Primary School Aged Learners Attending Primary Schools Split by Welsh and English Medium Over the Previous Five Academic Years										
Category	Academic Year									
	2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
Welsh Medium Primary Schools	4,269	19%	4,220	19%	4,152	18.8%	4,097	18.9%	4,038	18.3%
English Medium Primary Schools	18,153	81%	18,078	81%	17,894	81.2%	17,627	81.1%	18,021	81.7%
Total No. Primary Schools	22,422		22,298		22,046		21,724		22,059	

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and outlines the total number of reception/five year old learners attending Welsh medium primary schools for the previous five academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. The data demonstrates that the number of reception/five year old learners attending Welsh medium primary schools has slowly decreased over the last 3 academic years.

Table 2.2

Total Number of Reception/Five Year Old Learners Attending Welsh Medium Primary Schools Over the Previous Five Academic Years					
Year Group	Academic Year				
	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Reception	517	565	528	523	501
Reception Part Time	1	0	0	0	0
Total	518	565	528	523	501

The data in the table below, also derived from PLASC, outlines the total number of reception/five year old learners attending English medium primary schools for the previous five academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. The data demonstrates a decrease in the number of reception/five year old learners attending English medium schools over the last 3 years which is consistent with the data available on Welsh medium schools. This indicates that the number of reception/five year old learners attending primary schools across the board is decreasing.

Table 2.3

Total Number of Reception/Five Year Old Learners Attending English Medium Primary Schools Over the Previous Five Academic Years					
Year Group	Academic Year				
	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Reception	2,136	2,049	2,087	1,943	1,993
Reception Part Time	4	26	19	4	14
Total	2,140	2,075	2,106	1,947	2,007

The data in the table below is derived from PLASC and outlines surplus capacities in Welsh medium and dual language primary schools in RCT for the previous four academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. The data demonstrates that the percentage of surplus capacities in Welsh medium primary schools has increased to 22.8% during the last four years.

Table 2.4

Surplus Capacity in Welsh Medium Primary Schools in RCT				
Category	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Primary and Dual Language Schools	19.6%	20.7%	21.6%	22.8%

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and demonstrates the number and percentage of Black, Asian and minority ethnic background learners attending all schools in RCT. The data has been broken down further to outline the number of learners attending Welsh medium schools in RCT for the previous five academic years, up to and including the academic year 2022-2023.

Table 2.5

Number and Percentage of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Background Learners Attending Welsh Medium Schools in RCT										
	Academic Year									
	2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total No. of Learners	2,103		2,145		2,387		2,609		3,004	
No. of Learners Attending Welsh Medium Schools	210	9.99%	165	7.69%	206	8.63%	200	7.67%	210	6.99%

OUTCOME SUMMARY

Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme

In line with the new guidance for the Sustainable Communities for Learning rolling programme, the priorities of which are:

- Transforming learning environments and learner experience
- Meeting demand for school places
- Improving condition and suitability of the education estate
- Developing sustainable learning environments
- Supporting the community

We are currently working on our strategic outline programme for our new 9 year programme and will ensure the programme aligns with the WESP objectives, namely:

- Ensuring that every child in RCT has access to Welsh medium education in a school of their choosing and that there is sufficient supply to meet demand.
- Delivering significant investment to improve and provide modern educational facilities for Welsh medium schools and increase Welsh medium learner places at both primary and secondary school level.
- Extend Welsh medium Learning Support Classes and ALN provision across primary and secondary school settings.

Projects identified will form part of WESP sub-group discussions to ensure projects are aligned with our objectives. As we monitor and progress with project investment, the WESP targets will be reviewed to ensure identified project proposals are tailored to be consistent with the aims and objectives of the WESP.

We continue to deliver investment in Welsh medium primary education through the Band B Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. At the beginning of this academic year, we

delivered an extension to YGG Aberdar providing additional facilities and an additional 72 places at the school.

A new Welsh medium primary school is currently being constructed in Rhydyfelin on the site of the current dual language school at Heol y Celyn Primary. The new school will welcome the school's Welsh medium pupils and those currently attending YGG Pont Sion Norton. The school will contain first-class education facilities in a 21st Century building. Construction work is underway on the school site and is moving at speed. The school is on track to open to learners from September 2024.

We have progressed with plans to deliver a brand new Welsh medium school on a new site for YGG Llyn y Forwyn. Enablement work has begun onsite with construction due to commence over the summer period. The new school will open to learners from YGG Llyn y Forwyn from September 2024.

Impact of School Organisation Proposals

In line with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, school organisation proposals must be subject to consultation period before the proposal can be published. The consultation document must include information around the extent to which the proposal would support the targets of our WESP and how the proposal would expand or reduce Welsh language provision.

There are statutory requirements for Welsh Language Impact Assessments to be completed on all our school organisation proposals. The Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015 requires the Local Authority to ensure the person making, reviewing or reviewing a policy decision considers the effects the policy decision would have on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language or treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language. The Welsh Language Impact Assessments identifies:

- Any effect of school organisation proposals on the Welsh language (positive, negative or both).
- Notes ways of promoting the Welsh language including the use of Welsh.
- Any adverse effects on the Welsh language.
- Due regard to the various effects listed in the Welsh Language Standards.

To complete the impact assessment, key policy areas must be reviewed to assess the impact of the proposal, this includes the WESP. Impact assessments are reviewed by the Local Authority's Welsh Language Services and feedback is provided on the strengths and any potential areas for improvement. Once amendments are made, impact assessment are reviewed by the Officer Review Panel who give consideration to the different impacts identified and robustly scrutinise the proposals being considered.

Welsh Medium Provision in English Medium Schools

The introduction of the new Curriculum of Wales has placed statutory duties on all schools to incorporate Welsh into their curriculum as a mandatory requirement. To gather information on what's being done across English medium schools in RCT to promote the Welsh language, several schools were contacted and a total of 12 schools responded.

From the responses received, it's evident that the Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus programme run by CSCJES is having a positive impact on the increasing use of Welsh in English medium schools. Some of the common themes throughout the responses is the introduction of the Helpwr Heddiw/Helpwr y Dydd initiative and the establishment of Criw Cymraeg. The Helpwr Heddiw initiative is being used across all schools that responded, recognising learners use of Welsh using appropriate sentence patterns for their age. Each school has a Criw Cymraeg focussing on

developing and promoting the use of Welsh throughout the school. Criw Cymraeg activities across English medium schools include Welsh playground games, 'Siaradwyr Gymraeg yr Wythnos' certificates for learners who are chosen for their use of Welsh throughout the week and Cegin Cyw at lunchtimes whereby children ask for meals in Welsh. Some of the schools have linked in with Welsh medium schools in RCT to develop Criw Cymraeg activities and in some areas of the county, learners from these schools have attended English medium schools to support learners with the development and use of their Welsh language skills. All schools that responded provide weekly Welsh assemblies introducing the 'word', 'phrase' and 'question' of the week and focusing on different elements of Welsh language, culture, and heritage.

Schools are also using these opportunities to engage with parents/carers and providing support on how to develop children's Welsh language skills at home. Several schools reported that they have utilised the opportunities available with CSCJES to develop their Welsh language skills:

- Blaengwawr Primary School: 1 teacher has undertaken the Welsh Sabbatical Scheme.
- Llwydcoed Primary School: 1 teacher has undertaken the Welsh Sabbatical Scheme.
- Cefn & Craig yr Hesg: 1 teacher is on the course for September 2023 cohort.

It's positive to see that a number of schools have accessed support via the professional development opportunities available with CSCJES and further applications have been made for next year's Welsh Sabbatical Schemes in order to upskill staff and bring improvements to Welsh provision in our English medium schools. An increased use of incidental Welsh was reported by all schools both inside and outside of the classroom by both children and staff. A number of success stories were also shared, to include:

- Pontygwaith Primary School:

Holding a weekly parent/pupil workshop every Friday. The Welsh lead at the school spends the first half of the session teaching parents/carers Welsh skills with the children being invited to join their parents/carers during the second half of the session to show what they've learnt. This has proved to be very popular and a huge success at the school. Following on from the success of these sessions, the school now run a weekly Welsh class for the community led by the Welsh lead. This class runs after school every Thursday and have even had adults attending the sessions who aren't parents/carers of children attending the school.

- SS Gabriel & Raphael Primary School:

The whole school won a heritage award for their work on the Cynefin project which focuses on Welsh stories, songs, famous people, landscape, local artists, song writing, and performances based on your local area.

- Cwm Clydach Primary School:

The Welsh lead at the school has attended Tric a Chlic training and the school have now purchased the resources. This will be rolled out at the school from September 2023.

- Williamstown Primary School:

The school have requested a visit from the ambassador for the National Eisteddfod and have put themselves forward to participate in events.

- Cefn & Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools:

Teachers at the school have set up a Welsh choir focussing on learning and performing through Welsh.

Schools Transitioning to a Different Category

In September 2021, Penderyn Primary became solely a Welsh medium school. The Head of Penderyn Primary is a member of the WESP Outcome 2 Sub-group to support increasing numbers at the new Welsh medium school in an area of RCT where there was not a Welsh school previously.

A new Welsh medium primary school is currently being constructed in Rhydyfelin on the site of the current dual language school at Heol y Celyn Primary. The new school will welcome the school's Welsh medium pupils and those currently attending YGG Pont Sion Norton and will open to learners from September 2024.

Late Immersion Support

In February 2023, the Local Authority successfully recruited a specialist teacher to deliver Welsh language immersion provision to learners who are latecomers to Welsh medium education. Two Learning Support Assistants have also been recruited with the relevant skills and experience needed to support the delivery of immersion provision in RCT. The immersion lead has visited other immersion centres and networked with a range of practitioners to share best practices to identify the way in which provision can be rolled out in RCT. The provision will adapt a peripatetic model of delivery with the immersion team going out to the Welsh medium schools to support learners. The immersion lead has prepared a delivery plan for the roll out of provision and has successfully received funding to purchase resources.

The immersion lead has visited all Welsh medium schools in RCT to share information and resources with the schools and to promote the services available. The immersion team have created a Seesaw account where they'll be able to share photos of immersion sessions and learners progress, with permission of the parent/guardian. Immersion provision is being prioritised for a marketing campaign over the summer period to promote the support available to latecomers to the language. Changes are currently being made to the Local Authority's corporate website for information and signposting purposes. The immersion lead has worked with the Local Authority's Design team to create and print promotional leaflets which have been distributed to the community during events such as Parti Ponty and the Teddy Bears Picnic. Wider distribution of the leaflets will be a priority action during Year 2 of the WESP.

The immersion lead also attended an open day event at the new Welsh medium school in Rhydyfelin whereby parents/carers of learners currently attending the dual language school at Heol y Celyn, were in attendance. The immersion lead spoke with parents/carers and promoted the support available through immersion for parents/carers who did not want to move their children to the new English medium school site. This was the first time many had heard of the service as it's something new to the authority. The immersion lead will engage with parents/carers again closer to the time of the new school opening.

The immersion team are currently supporting learners during the final term of this academic year with 3 learners accessing support:

- 1 from Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castellau
- 1 from Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Evan James
- 1 from Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tonyrefail

The team started to support these learners from the 12th of June 2023 and will continue to support from September. Baseline assessments were completed in the first instance to have a clear understanding of each learners needs so that the service can be tailored to support these learners. Progress monitoring and reporting documents have been created which will be shared with the relevant school and parents/carers to show progress. Provision will be fully operational from

September 2023 and the team have already recruited 2 further learners to commence support from September.

Outcome 2 Sub-Group

A sub-group has been established to focus solely on each outcome of the WESP. The sub-groups provide an effective focus for the Local Authority in partnership with external groups and organisations. The sub-group have met both virtually and in-person on a termly basis to review the actions listed on the Outcome 2 Annual Work Plan and provide updates on any progress made and to discuss next steps for actions, where appropriate. The sub-group meetings have provided opportunities to collaborate and share ideas amongst different school cluster groups.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

We have a dedicated group focussing solely on this outcome. The Head of Achievement leads this sub-group and membership includes internal officers and representation from Welsh medium primary schools.

The initial sub-group meetings at the beginning of this academic year focussed on developing the work plan which details the overarching targets, the actions and the key activities required to achieve the targets. The Outcome 2 Sub-group meets on a termly basis to review the targets and actions listed on the work plan to provide an opportunity for members to provide updates on any progress made, where appropriate, and to identify ways to move forward with certain actions. These meetings have been held both virtually and in-person and have had good levels of engagement. The sub-group lead will review end dates of actions on the work plan to ensure the group remains on targets and in situations where the end date has surpassed, questions will be asked as to why and follow on steps agreed upon to ensure we move forward and don't miss any targets. Following each meeting, minutes of the meeting are shared with members of the sub-group and the 'Progress/Evaluation' column on the work plan is updated with any comments made during the meeting.

OUTCOME LEVEL RISKS

- Falling birth rates across RCT:

The live birth information received from the Local Health Board indicates that birth rates in general are falling in RCT. This will impact both Welsh and English medium schools and our projected targets as we progress through the WESP.

- Low uptake for immersion provision:

As this is a new service to RCT, we're not able to predict demand for the service yet.

ASSURANCE / MITIGATION ACTION

- Falling birth rates across RCT:

The live birth data received by the Local Health Board needs to be used more to strategically plan Welsh medium provision in RCT based on areas where births are occurring. Wider promotion on the benefits of receiving education through the medium of Welsh to be implemented.

- Low uptake for immersion provision:
Implement a marketing campaign to promote the support available to latecomers.

Outcome 3

More children continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another

KEY ANNUAL DATA

PLASC Data

The data in the table below is derived from PLASC and outlines the transition rates of learners between each key stage for Welsh medium primary, secondary and through schools for the previous five academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. Please note that the transition rates between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 takes into consideration learners from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough attending YG Rhydywaun due to there not being a Welsh medium secondary school in that county. Similarly, Ysgol Llanhari in the South Taf area sees learners attending from Bridgend County Borough due to the geographical location of the school.

Table 3.1

Transition Rates of Learners Between Each Key Stage for Welsh Medium Primary, Secondary and Through Schools for the Previous Five Academic Years					
Transition	Academic Year				
	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2	97.4%	97.5%	96.1%	95.8%	97.9%
Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3	97.3%	94%	94.7%	95.4%	95.5%
Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4	98.2%	97.3%	98.7%	98.3%	96.1%
Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5	53.5%	55.9%	48.5%	48.9%	45.1%

It's positive to see the percentage of learners transitioning from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 has increased this year and is now back to pre-Covid percentages. Transition rates from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 has remained static over the previous five academic years however the transition from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 shows a decline in the percentages transition through this phase this year. The percentages of learners transitioning from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 is concerning as the percentage has decreased by almost 10 percentage points over the duration of the last five years.

However, when comparing this data with the transition rates of learners between each Key Stage for English medium schools, the data is much the same. The percentages transitioning

from Foundation Phase through each Key Stage up until Key Stage 4 are consistent with the percentages transitioning in Welsh medium schools. The transition from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 in English medium schools also shows a decrease of almost 10 percentage points over the duration of the last five years. This indicates that the transition between these key stages is not only an issue being faced in Welsh medium education but across the board.

Table 3.2

Transition Rates of Learners Between Each Key Stage for English Medium Primary, Secondary and All Through Schools for the Previous Five Academic Years					
Transition	Academic Year				
	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2	97.6%	97.6%	97.5%	98.5%	97.6%
Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3	95.9%	96.1%	96.1%	95.1%	95.8%
Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4	98.2%	98.0%	98.5%	97.7%	97.1%
Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5	42.6%	44.0%	45.4%	40.7%	33.5%

OUTCOME SUMMARY

Monitoring Linguistic Progression

The linguistic progression of learners is monitored by the Local Authority's Education Data team and begins from the earliest stages of statutory education. Once PLASC data is available, the data team analyse the data and prepare pupil projection reports which are shared with all Welsh medium schools in RCT. The data is further analysed to identify any notable data changes in relation to Welsh medium education. If any anomalies in the data are identified, or if any of the Headteachers request to discuss this further, the data team will convene meetings with the respective Headteachers.

To ensure we can monitor linguistic progression from pre-statutory education phase, the Local Authority's Education Data team are working with Mudiad Meithrin on a new 'Data Sharing Agreement' between the Local Authority and Welsh medium early years settings. This agreement will allow for accurate data to be gathered on the numbers accessing the settings and the numbers transitioning onwards to primary education. Through implementing this new data agreement, this will enable the Education Data team to monitor the transition of children from early years settings to Welsh medium primary education and onwards through each stage of their statutory education. As we move forward with the ten-year plan, this will simplify the process of monitoring transition through each stage of statutory education as well as

helping us to identify the stages where learners are transitioning out of Welsh medium education to inform future planning of targeted marketing and promotional strategies.

During the first year of the WESP, changes have been made to improve the process of handling in-year transfer requests. This change means that in-year transfer forms can only be provided by the current school. The current Headteacher must have signed the form before the school admissions team will process the application. This change has been implemented and all Headteachers in both Welsh and English medium schools have been made aware of the change. This will improve communications between Welsh and English medium schools, ensuring transfers are actioned in a co-ordinated manner and providing the opportunity for the current Headteacher to engage with the parents/carers prior to making the move. The message around this change continues to be reinforced during regular Headteacher meetings. As this is a new change to the process, we do not have data available as of yet to monitor the impact of this change.

Transition Arrangements from Primary to Secondary Schools

Each Welsh medium secondary school in RCT has a Cluster Curriculum Policy in place between them and the primary schools within their cluster which outlines their transition arrangements for the academic year, in line with the new Welsh Statutory Instruments: 2022 No.566 (W.131) Education, Wales, The Transition from Primary to Secondary School (Wales) Regulations 2022.

There are 4 Welsh medium secondary schools in RCT, each of which has their own transition arrangements with the primary schools within their cluster. The examples below provide a brief overview of the some of the arrangements in place in line with each schools' curriculum policy:

Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun:

- Transition days at the school for Year 6 learners of the cluster primary schools to provide opportunities to visit the school, meet other learners in their year group and have a feel for some of the lessons.
- Open evenings/information evenings for parents/carers of Year 6 pupils of the cluster primary schools.
- Teachers at the school to visit Year 5 learners of the cluster primary schools to host engagement activities.
- Share resources and upcoming open events with parents/carers of Year 6 learners via the 'Year 6' section of the schools' website.
- Additional transition days for vulnerable learners/learners with ALN.
- Cluster schools' sports competition day in the summer term.
- Cluster schools Year 6 residential transition weekend event at Llangrannog (postponed this year, recommencing in 2023-2024).

Ysgol Garth Olwg:

- Transition days at the school for Year 6 learners to visit the school and other learners in their year group from other cluster schools.
- Transition days at the school for Year 5 learners.
- Transition meetings held for parents/carers of learners in Year 5 and Year 6 of the cluster primary schools.
- The transition team visits all primary schools within the cluster to host engagement activities.

Ysgol Llanhari:

- Host an open day for Year 6 parents/carers of the cluster primary schools to visit the school and speak directly with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and the Transition Lead.
- Open evening/information evening event held for Year 6 parents/carers to of cluster primary schools to attend and gather information/ask any questions.
- Teachers from the foreign languages department of the school visits Year 5 and Year 6 learners of the cluster primary schools to provide weekly language lessons.
- ALNCo visits each cluster primary school to discuss the needs of vulnerable learners/learners with ALN.
- Additional open evening/information evening for Year 6 vulnerable learners/learners with ALN and parents/carers of each cluster primary school to attend and meet with the inclusion team.

Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda:

- Offer opportunities for parents/carers of vulnerable learners/learners with ALN to visit the school to meet the inclusion team.
- Host information evenings for parents/carers of Year 6 learners at the school.
- As a cluster, funding a transition teacher to support transition arrangements.
- Arrange a trip to watch the schools' drama production for Year 6 learners of each cluster primary school.
- Cluster transition teacher spends 1 day a week in each cluster primary school to work directly with Year 6 learners.
- Cluster transition teachers continues to support Year 7 learners once they've started secondary school.
- Transition days for Year 6 learners of cluster primary schools to visit the school, meet other learners in their year group and experience some of the different lessons available.
- Hold transition days at each cluster primary school in agreed areas of learning, whereby staff from the school will visit each cluster school.
- Year 6 residential transition weekend event at Llangrannog with each cluster primary school.
- Cluster schools' sports competition day in the summer term.
- Year 7 residential trip during the first term of school.

Continuity of Arrangements for Learners Receiving Welsh Medium Education

Work has been ongoing across the region and with partners such as Coleg y Cymoedd to ensure continuity of arrangements for learners receiving Welsh medium education. On a regional basis, CSCJES have been working with Welsh medium secondary schools across the region to promote the opportunities available via the E-sgol programme. E-sgol have visited Ysgol Llanhari to promote the opportunities available. Ysgol Llanhari have taken advantage of the E-sgol programme and have partnered with YG Llangynwyd, which is in Bridgend County Borough, for the delivery of the programme. E-sgol have also presented to the Headteachers who are members of the Gyda'n Gilydd group however to date only Ysgol Llanhari have engaged with the programme.

E-sgol held a conference event on the 3rd of July to promote the programme to schools across the region. The conference provided schools with an opportunity to further understand what is available through E-sgol, looking at successful case studies and networking with other schools. The conference was widely advertised with secondary schools across in RCT via CSCJES and the Local Authority's Education team communication channels as well as being promoted during WESP steering group and sub-group meetings. A total of 39 attendees

across the region attending the conference, however E-sgol have confirmed that no further schools have shown interest as of yet. During Year 2 of the WESP, we will continue to work with CSCJES and Welsh medium secondary school to promote the support available and the benefits of accessing the provision. Data on the number of courses being delivered via the Ysgol Llanhari and YG Llangynwyd partnership can be found under Outcome 4 (Table 4.8).

Welsh medium secondary schools have been working Coleg y Cymoedd to explore opportunities for collaborative working between the schools and the college to ensure a more extensive Welsh medium curriculum is available for Key Stage 5 learners. Coleg y Cymoedd Senior Leadership team and the Recruitment and Progression Manager have met with representatives from YG Rhydywaun, Ysgol Garth Olwg and Ysgol Llanhari to discuss 14-16 pathways with the aim of aiding retention of learners into Welsh medium sixth form education. Discussions went well and the college are now putting together a new 14-16 pathways Key Stage 5 collaborative offer. This will be monitored during the next academic year to ensure the conversations around this continue.

Outcome 3 Sub-Group

A sub-group has been established to focus solely on each outcome of the WESP. The sub-groups provide an effective focus for the Local Authority in partnership with external groups and organisations. The sub-group have met both virtually and in-person on a termly basis to review the actions listed on the Outcome 3 Annual Work Plan and provide updates on any progress made and to discuss next steps for actions, where appropriate.

The sub-group meetings have provided opportunities to collaborate and share ideas amongst different school cluster groups and partner organisations. For example, transition arrangements being used in Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda were shared with Ysgol Llanhari who have now adapted some of these arrangements into their own transition arrangements to improve their transition rates from primary to secondary, especially between the cluster schools which are not on the school site. During these meetings, different sets of data have been reviewed and analysed by the group which has provided opportunities for those on the group to access the data sooner. The group has looked at baseline numbers of Welsh medium schools at each year group, numbers transitioning from primary to secondary education and pupil forecasts. This has welcomed open discussions around these key areas of transition and provided opportunities for the Headteachers who are members of this group, to speak directly with the Head of Data Systems and Admissions around different areas of data.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

We have a dedicated group focussing solely on this outcome. The Head of Service Transformation, Data Systems, Admissions and Governors leads this sub-group and membership includes internal officers, representation from Welsh medium primary schools, Coleg y Cymoedd and Menter Iaith RCT.

The initial sub-group meetings at the beginning of this academic year focussed on developing the work plan which details the overarching targets, the actions and the key activities required to achieve the targets. The Outcome 3 Sub-group meets on a termly basis to review the targets and actions listed on the work plan to provide an opportunity for members to provide updates on any progress made, where appropriate, and to identify ways to move forward with certain actions. These meetings have been held both virtually and in-person and have had good levels of engagement. The sub-group lead will review end dates of actions on the work

plan to ensure the group remains on targets and in situations where the end date has surpassed, questions will be asked as to why and follow on steps agreed upon to ensure we move forward and don't miss any targets. Following each meeting, minutes of the meeting are shared with members of the sub-group and the 'Progress/Evaluation' column on the work plan is updated with any comments made during the meeting.

OUTCOME LEVEL RISKS

- Falling birth rates across RCT:

The live birth information received from the Local Health Board indicates that birth rates in general are falling across RCT. This will impact both Welsh and English medium settings and our projected targets as we progress through the WESP.

- Transition data available on the numbers transitioning from early years settings into statutory education is not accurate:

The data available on numbers transitioning from Welsh medium childcare and early years settings into statutory education is not accurate. The data available is gathered verbally through settings have discussions with parents/carers. The data also includes numbers accessing English medium sessions and therefore needs to be looked at in more detail.

- Retention of learners from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 in Welsh medium schools:

Due to the lack of Welsh medium vocational qualifications available, learners are opting into English medium schools or colleges instead if they know which vocation they wish to pursue.

- Workforce issues at secondary school level:

Welsh medium secondary schools are facing issues with recruiting specialist staff for several subject areas meaning the Welsh medium GCSE and A Level offer may not be on par with neighbouring English medium schools. This is an issue being faced pan Wales as many practitioners are leaving the profession.

ASSURANCE / MITIGATION ACTION

- Falling birth rates across RCT:

The Local Authority's Education Data team recently met with Mudiad Meithrin to discuss this in more detail. This data needs to be used more to strategically plan Welsh medium provision across the County Borough based on areas where births are occurring.

- Transition data available on the numbers transitioning from early years settings into statutory education is not accurate:

- The Local Authority's Education Data team are working with Mudiad Meithrin on a new 'Data Sharing Agreement' between the Local Authority and Welsh medium childcare and early years settings in order to gather details of children attending the settings so that these can be mapped across into primary education, ensuring we have official data on the numbers transitioning. This will be in place by September 2023.
- A meeting will be arranged for the new academic year between Flying Start colleagues, Childcare Development colleagues and Mudiad Meithrin to discuss further

concerns around settings offering Welsh and English medium sessions to ensure the data being recorded moving forward is accurate.

- Retention of learners from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 in Welsh medium schools:
 - The Gyda'n Gilydd group are working with the WJEC to create Welsh medium Level 3 vocational qualifications.
 - Coleg y Cymoedd to are working with Welsh medium secondary schools to create a Key Stage 5 collaborative offer. This will be an action on Year 2 of the work plan to ensure the developments around this are monitored closely.

- Workforce issues at secondary school level:
 - Work with partners such as Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, Cardiff Metropolitan University and CSCJES to promote the benefits of teaching as a profession to encourage people to consider this as a career pathway.
 - Promote the alternative routes into teaching available via the Open University Salaried Route whereby Welsh Government contributes towards the student teacher's salary and the ITE programme.

Outcome 4

More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh

KEY ANNUAL DATA

PLASC Data

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and outlines the total number of secondary school aged learners attending schools in RCT, split by Welsh and English medium for the previous five academic years up to and including 2022-2023. The percentages of learners receiving their education through the medium of Welsh and English has remained stable over the previous five academic years.

Table 4.1

Total Number of Secondary School Aged Learners Attending Secondary Schools Split by Welsh and English Medium Over the Previous Five Academic Years										
Category	Academic Year									
	2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
Welsh Medium Schools	3,058	19.4%	3,141	19.6%	3,197	19.3%	3,136	19%	3,121	19%
English Medium Schools	12,685	80.6%	12,868	80.4%	13,346	80.7%	13,365	81%	13,317	81%
Total No. All Schools	15,473		16,009		16,543		16,501		16,438	

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and outlines the total number of year ten learners attending Welsh medium secondary schools for the previous five academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. The data demonstrates that the number of year ten learners attending Welsh medium secondary schools has steadily increased over the previous five academic years, with the most recent year showing the highest number of learners.

Table 4.2

Total Number of Year Ten Learners Attending Welsh Medium Secondary Schools Over the Previous Five Academic Years					
Year Group	Academic Year				
	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Year Ten	496	513	517	533	539

The data in the table below, also derived from PLASC, outlines the total number of year ten learners attending English medium secondary schools for the previous five academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. The number of year ten learners in English medium schools was at its highest in 2020-

2021 and has declined since then, however there is a slight increase this year when comparing with the previous year.

Table 4.3

Total Number of Year Ten Learners Attending English Medium Secondary Schools Over the Previous Five Academic Years					
Year Group	Academic Year				
	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Year Ten	2,105	2,251	2,303	2,232	2,284

The data in the table below is derived from PLASC and outlines surplus capacities in Welsh medium secondary and through schools in RCT for the previous four academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. The data demonstrates that the percentage of surplus capacities in Welsh medium secondary schools has increased to 27% during the last four years.

Table 4.4

Surplus Capacity in Welsh Medium Secondary and Through Schools for the Previous Four Academic Years				
Category	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Secondary and Through Schools	23.1%	21.0%	26.6%	27%

Data on the Number of Learners Registered for GCSE Welsh

The data in the table that follows is derived from Welsh Government data and outlines the total percentage of year eleven learner entries for GCSEs in Welsh (first and second language) for the previous five academic years, up to and including the academic year 2021-2022. The data demonstrates a slight increase in the number of entries for Welsh Second Language GCSE however the entries for Welsh First Language has remained stable over this period of time.

Table 4.5

Total Percentage of Year Eleven Learner Entries for GCSEs in Welsh (First and Second Language) Over the Previous Five Academic Years					
Category	Academic Year				
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Welsh (First Language)	17%	17%	18%	18.4%	18.2%
Welsh (Second Language)	45%	59%	63%	62.1%	64.2%

The data in the table that follows is derived from Welsh Government data and outlines the total percentage of year twelve and thirteen learner entries for AS and A Level Welsh (first and second language) for the previous five academic years, up to and including 2021-2022. During the most recent

academic year, the number of learner entries has decreased slightly when comparing to the previous four years.

Table 4.6

Total Percentage of Year Twelve and Thirteen Learner Entries for AS and A Level in Welsh (First and Second Language) Over the Previous Five Academic Years					
Category	Academic Year				
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Welsh (First and Second Language)	4.2%	3.7%	3.5%	3.7%	3.1%

Coleg y Cymoedd Data

The data in the table below is provided by Coleg y Cymoedd and demonstrates the number of learners at the college that completed elements of their studies through the medium of Welsh for the academic year 2021-2022. This is the most recent data available, the data for the current academic year will be released in January 2024. An explanation of the codes is provided below.

Table 4.7

Number of Learners Completing Bilingual Learning at Coleg y Cymoedd	
Code	2021-2022
B1	13
B3	43
C1	592
Total	648

Code

E1	Learning and assessment completed in English only.
B3	A small amount of Welsh medium learning completed in Welsh, limited to verbal communication or a minor part of the learning activity, with the assessment being completed in English only. This can be used to record situations where some Welsh is used during learning, however minimum use of incidental Welsh is not sufficient for it to be recorded. There needs to be Welsh language interaction between the assessor/lecturer/teacher and learner for it to be a meaningful use of the language.
B2	A significant amount of Welsh medium learning (both verbal and written) used in many, but not all parts, of the learning activity. Assessment completed mainly in English, but there may be some elements of Welsh.
B1	Learning completed in a bilingual context with at least 50% of the available assessments within the learning activity being completed through the medium of Welsh. The outcome may be achieved using any appropriate teaching methodology.
C1	Learning completed in a Welsh medium context with all the available assessments within the learning activity being completed through the medium of Welsh.

E-sgol Data

At present, there is only 1 Welsh medium secondary school in RCT providing further opportunities to learners through the E-sgol programme. Ysgol Llanhari have a partnership with YG Llangynwyd which is located in Bridgend County Borough. Although this school is in a neighbouring county, this is the closest Welsh medium secondary school to Ysgol Llanhari geographically.

The data in the table below has been provided by E-sgol and outlines the courses being delivered through the Llanhari/Llangynwyd partnership for the academic year 2022-2023. The data contains the number of learners on each course split by year group however, these figures also include learners accessing the programme from YG Llangynwyd so are not specific to RCT learners only. The data shows that there are 10 courses being delivered this academic year with 48 year 12 learners and 15 year 13 learners accessing learning through the E-sgol programme.

Table 4.8

Courses Offered and Numbers on Courses for the Ysgol Llanhari/ Ysgol Llangynwyd E-sgol Partnership		
Subject	Year 12	Year 13
Sociology	9	1
Health and Social Care	10	5
Physical Education	4	0
Music	1	0
Sports	1	4
Product Design	2	0
Physics	9	1
Protective Services	4	3
Digital Technology	8	0
Applied ICT	0	1
Total	48	15

OUTCOME SUMMARY**Increasing the Number of Welsh Medium Qualifications Available**

A key focus of Outcome 4 of the WESP is to maintain and broaden the GCSE, AS and A Level provision available through the medium of Welsh. CSCJES have been working closely with the Gyda'n Gilydd group and WJEC to address the disparity in the number of accessible qualifications available, especially vocational qualifications through the medium of Welsh. Funding has been utilised for the creation of more accessible qualifications, mainly developing Level 2 and 3 Welsh medium vocational qualifications. CSCJES has provided Gyda'n Gilydd with £10,000 funding in 2021-2022 and an additional £10,000 in 2022-2023 to work alongside WJEC to develop Welsh medium Level 3 vocational qualifications. Qualifications are currently being developed for Business, Tourism, Public Services and Sports. The group continues to work with the WJEC on this project and strong progress is being made.

Welsh medium secondary schools have been working Coleg y Cymoedd to explore opportunities for collaborative working between the schools and the college to ensure a more extensive Welsh medium curriculum is available for Key Stage 5 learners. Coleg y Cymoedd Senior Leadership team and the

Recruitment and Progression Manager have met with representatives from YG Rhydywaun, Ysgol Garth Olwg and Ysgol Llanhari to discuss 14-16 pathways with the aim of aiding retention of learners into Welsh medium sixth form education. Discussions went well and the college are now putting together a new 14-16 pathways Key Stage 5 collaborative offer. This will be monitored during the next academic year to ensure the conversations around this continue.

Coleg y Cymoedd are also developing Welsh medium and bilingual provision in vocational areas in line with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol 'Further Education and Apprenticeship Welsh Medium Action Plan.' The college has employed Welsh language facilitators in the areas of Childcare, Health and Social Care and Public Services are currently recruiting in the areas of Creative Industries and Business. The Welsh language facilitators in these priority areas are working directly with tutors and learners to develop bilingual provision. Coleg y Cymoedd are continuing to work closely with awarding bodies to ensure learners are able to submit work in Welsh.

Tools and resources developed by Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and Sgiliau Iaith are used to encourage the use of Welsh within the college classroom. Welsh medium and bilingual opportunities (both in the classroom and extracurricular) are being widely advertised through college brochures, 'Welsh at Coleg y Cymoedd' booklets, internal staff and student portals, social media campaigns and open events and fairs.

Welsh Medium Learning Pathways

In our WESP, we included our aims to further develop learning pathways for 14 to 19 year old learners to provide a wider range of options for learners. The Local Authority's Gatsby Benchmark Manager is a member of the Outcome 4 sub-group and has been proactive in discussions around developing the Gatsby Benchmark Programme and Green Light Provision in our Welsh medium secondary schools. Amendments have been made to the Benchmark framework to support the development of further learning pathways in Welsh medium schools, to include:

- Added to Benchmark 4 – "With an emphasis on all subject teachers to emphasise on the importance of succeeding in Welsh".
- Added to Benchmark 7 "Encounters with Further and Higher Education" – "Pupils understand and have experience of routes that transition or move into further and higher education through the medium of Welsh".

The Gatsby Benchmark Manager has made links with Sian Lloyd Morgan (senior lecturer at Cardiff University with responsibility for Welsh Language pathways) to develop further understandings of what is available to share with career leads and Headteachers. This will be a focus for Year 2 of the WESP.

Green Light Provision is now being delivered in all Welsh medium secondary and through schools, linking careers using the Welsh language and how they can be achieved through Welsh qualifications. A Welsh speaking member of staff is now available to conduct the advice and guidance sessions and Green Light support through the medium of Welsh.

A pilot project entitled 'Ysbrydoli Fi/Inspire Me' has taken place during this academic year in both Welsh and English medium secondary schools in RCT. The project invites inspirational speakers from a range of career backgrounds to speak to learners from all year groups on their career journeys and how the ability to communicate in Welsh has supported their career aspirations. A third pilot school, an English medium through school, will run the 'Ysbrydoli Fi' programme in January 2024 focusing on career pathways through and using the Welsh language.

E-sgol Provision in RCT

There is currently only 1 school in RCT engaging with the E-sgol provision to provide learners with a wider range of subjects through the medium of Welsh. Following a visit to Ysgol Llanhari by the E-sgol team whereby they promoted the opportunities available, the school have taken advantage of the programme and have partnered with YG Llangynwyd, located in Bridgend County Borough, for the delivery of the programme. E-sgol have also presented to the Headteachers who are members of the Gyda'n Gilydd group however to date only Ysgol Llanhari have engaged with the programme. The data in the table above (Table 4.8) demonstrates the range of subjects being accessed by learners at Ysgol Llanhari through the E-sgol programme, providing a wider offer of Welsh medium qualifications to aid retention of learners at the school.

E-sgol held a conference event on the 3rd of July to promote the programme to schools across the region. The conference provided schools with an opportunity to further understand what is available through E-sgol, looking at successful case studies and networking with other schools. The conference was widely advertised with secondary schools in RCT via CSCJES and the Local Authority's Education team communication channels as well as being promoted during WESP steering group and sub-group meetings. A total of 39 attendees across the region attending the conference, however E-sgol have confirmed that no further schools have shown interest as of yet. We will continue to work with CSCJES and Welsh medium secondary schools in RCT to promote the support available via the E-sgol programme to widen their Welsh medium qualification offer.

Promoting Welsh as a Subject and Subjects Through the Medium of Welsh

CSCJES prepared a document linking through to a collection of resources produced by Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol that support schools to emphasise and promote the benefits of studying Welsh as a subject. The resources encourage learners to continue to study Welsh as an AS/A Level subject and as a university degree. The collection contains various materials such as video clips and links to external websites. The link to these resources: <https://www.porth.ac.uk/en/collection/pam-astudio-r-gymraeg-fel-pwnc>

The document contained a link to the 'Choose Lefel A Cymraeg' campaign and resources. This campaign is funded by Welsh Government and aims to encourage more young learners to study Welsh as an A Level by providing promotional assets to raise awareness around the endless benefits the language has on academic, cultural and working life. The link to the campaign and resources: <https://www.porth.ac.uk/en/collection/dewisa-lefel-a-cymraeg-ymgyrch-ac-adnoddau>

The document also linked through to the E-sgol website which outlines its aims to expand opportunities for post-14 and post-16 learners to study courses that would otherwise not be available to them. This document has been shared widely with both Welsh and English medium secondary schools in RCT via CSCJES and the Local Authority's Education team communication channels.

In order to ensure parents/carers are informed of the opportunities available, changes have been made to the Local Authority's corporate website to include a section on post-16 provision for learners in RCT. The changes made were the first step in creating a post-16 provision section of the website. During Year 2 of the WESP, further changes will be made to the website to develop this further along with schools' individual websites to ensure the post-16 Welsh medium offer is available for parents/carers to see, ensuring the opportunities which are available are widely promoted.

CSCJES are also looking into funding a group to produce marketing resources aimed at increasing the number of learners studying Welsh as a subject, and subjects through the medium of Welsh. CSCJES have had discussions with Welsh Government around this and it was highlighted that the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol have produced a wide range of resources which have now been shared directly with schools via CSCJES communication channels and via their social media platforms.

CSCJES have informed schools of the 2023-2024 'Welsh in Education Grant' which is available from Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. This grant is aimed at promoting Welsh as a subject with the aim of increasing the number of learners studying Welsh at A Level. CSCJES are awaiting uptake data for RCT from Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol: Welsh in Education Grant - [Welsh in Education Fund 2022/23](#)

The benefits of studying Welsh as a subject are also being promoted in our English medium schools. Porth Community School, which is an English medium through school, faced challenges at the beginning of this academic year as they were not able to recruit a Welsh medium teacher to deliver Welsh lessons at the school. This had an impact on the opportunities available to offer Welsh as subject to the older learners as they did not have a specialist teacher who could deliver these lessons. In recent months, the school have successfully recruited a Welsh teacher who has already implemented positive changes at the school with regards to changing attitudes towards the Welsh language.

A 'Cryw Cymraeg' has been established for Years 5, 6 and 7 which allows learners to vote for staff who have used incidental Welsh in lessons and throughout the school. The aim of this initiative is to raise awareness and use of incidental Welsh across the school in an engaging and impactful way. The 'Cryw Cymraeg' learners have also created posters for the school based on bilingualism and the advantages of speaking and studying Welsh and held a competition where learners had to create a Welsh welcome sign to be placed in reception areas. These activities form part of a learner centred initiative where the school are shifting the focus from Welsh being imposed by teachers, to learners having direct ownership of how Welsh can become an increasingly relevant part of the everyday culture of school. Plans are already in place for activities for the next academic year which include:

- Language teachers choosing a language ambassador at the end of each half term for a breacktime treat.
- Promoting and celebrating language focused cultural events – European day of languages, Santes Dwynwen etc.
- The school Eisteddfod will increase in prominence and scope to involve a variety of acts and skills in collaboration with other staff and subject areas.
- A trip to Llangrannog currently being planned with the Urdd for Year 6 and 7 learners for March 2024.

Courses Offered and Uptake Through the Medium of Welsh

The Local Authority's 14-19 Strategy Officer works closely with CSCJES and local partnerships to monitor the number of courses offered and the uptake through the medium of Welsh, as required by Section 116B (4) of the Education Act 2022.

The data below shows the number of courses offered through the medium of Welsh to year 10 and year 11 learners in RCT. This data relates to courses being delivered fully through Welsh, however it's important to note that there are a small number of no more than 18 learners in this age category who are completing the course bilingually. The number of courses being offered through the medium of Welsh at post-14 qualification level has remained fairly consistent over the previous four years. It's positive to see that the number of learners undertaking courses through the medium of Welsh at post-14 qualification level has steadily increased over this time period.

Table 4.8

Post-14 Welsh Medium Offer – Number of Courses and Number of Learners				
Year	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Number of Courses Offered Through the Medium of Welsh	32	31	31	33
Number of learners taking courses through the medium of Welsh	1,002	1,024	1,038	1,046

The data below shows the number of courses offered through the medium of Welsh to year 12 and year 13 learners in RCT. This data relates to courses being delivered fully through Welsh, however as mentioned above, there are a small number of no more than 18 learners in this age category who are completing the course bilingually. The number of courses offered through the medium of Welsh at post-16 qualification level is consistent with the post-14 offer in terms of the number of courses being offered is fairly consistent over the previous four academic years. However, the number of learners undertaking courses through the medium of Welsh at post-16 level has declined since the academic year 2020-2021. Although there is an increase in the number of learners during 2022-2023, this is still a decrease on the numbers undertaking courses prior to 2020-2021.

Table 4.9

Post-16 Welsh Medium Offer – Number of Courses and Number of Learners				
Year	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Number of Courses Offered Through the Medium of Welsh	33	33	32	34
Number of learners taking courses through the medium of Welsh	474	484	449	465

The data demonstrates the challenges currently being faced with the retention of learners in Welsh medium education at post-16 level as the numbers undertaking courses through the medium of Welsh at this level have more than halved during each academic year when comparing with the numbers undertaking courses at post-14 qualification level. The Local Authority will continue to work with partners and schools in RCT to develop Welsh medium vocational qualifications and to further promote the qualifications available through the medium of Welsh with the aim of increasing the numbers as we progress through the ten year plan.

Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme

We continue to deliver investment in Welsh medium primary education through the Band B Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. At the beginning of this academic year, we delivered an extension to YG Rhydywaun to increase capacity at the school. The brand new block on the school site opened to learners from September 2022 and created an additional 187 learner places at the school.

A design team is currently being assembled to look at development options to deliver a modern, innovative teaching and learning environment at YG Cwm Rhondda. Proposals are currently in their earliest stages, these will be developed further during year 2 of the WESP in collaboration with the school, and officers will be working to secure funding via the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme.

Outcome 4 Sub-Group

A sub-group has been established to focus solely on each outcome of the WESP. The sub-groups provide an effective focus for the Local Authority in partnership with external groups and organisations. The sub-group have met on a termly basis to review the actions listed on the Outcome 4 Annual Work Plan and provide updates on any progress made and to discuss next steps for actions, where appropriate. The establishment of this sub-group has been successful in creating constructive working relationships between the Local Authority, CSCJES, Welsh medium secondary schools and Coleg y Cymoedd who are all working towards the same goal of broadening and maintaining learning opportunities through the medium of Welsh. The sub-group meetings have provided opportunities to collaborate and share ideas amongst different school cluster groups.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

We have a dedicated group focussing solely on this outcome. The Head of Achievement and Wellbeing leads this sub-group and membership includes internal officers, representation from Welsh medium secondary schools, local college and CSCJES.

The initial sub-group meetings at the beginning of this academic year focussed on developing the work plan which details the overarching targets, the actions and the key activities required to achieve the targets. The Outcome 4 Sub-group meets on a termly basis to review the targets and actions listed on the work plan to provide an opportunity for members to provide updates on any progress made, where appropriate, and to identify ways to move forward with certain actions. The sub-group lead will review end dates of actions on the work plan to ensure the group remains on targets and in situations where the end date has surpassed, questions will be asked as to why and follow on steps agreed upon to ensure we move forward and don't miss any targets. Following each meeting, minutes of the meeting are shared with members of the sub-group and the 'Progress/Evaluation' column on the work plan is updated with any comments made during the meeting.

OUTCOME LEVEL RISKS

- Workforce issues at secondary school level:
Welsh medium secondary schools are facing issues with recruiting specialist staff for a number of subject areas meaning the Welsh medium GCSE and A Level offer may not be on par with neighbouring English medium schools. This is an issue being faced pan Wales as many practitioners are leaving the profession.
- Retention of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 learners in Welsh medium schools:
Due to the lack of Welsh medium vocational qualifications available, learners are opting into English medium schools or colleges instead if they know which vocation they wish to pursue.

- Funding schemes ending:

The Local Authority received funding to roll out the Green Light Provision in Welsh medium schools which has proven to be successful, however this funding will end eventually and there's no confirmation of further funding as of yet.

- New qualifications:

Certain qualifications have not been renewed which runs the risk of continuum of learning for some learners who may opt to an English medium school or college to carry out the qualification.

ASSURANCE / MITIGATION ACTION

- Workforce issues at secondary school level:

- Work with partners such as Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, Cardiff Metropolitan University and CSCJES to promote the benefits of teaching as a profession to encourage people to consider this as a career pathway.
- Promote the alternative routes into teaching available via the Open University Salaried Route whereby Welsh Government contributes towards the student teacher's salary and the ITE programme.

- Retention of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 learners in Welsh medium schools:

- The Gyda'n Gilydd group are working with the WJEC to create Welsh medium Level 3 vocational qualifications.
- Coleg y Cymoedd to are working with Welsh medium secondary schools to create a Key Stage 5 collaborative offer. This will be an action on Year 2 of the work plan to ensure the developments around this are monitored closely.

- Funding schemes ending:

We hope that further funding will come available once this funding scheme ends as the roll out of the provision in Welsh medium schools has proven to be a success.

- New qualifications:

We are awaiting decisions and consultations from Welsh Government and Qualification Wales regarding this issue.

Outcome 5

More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school

KEY ANNUAL DATA

Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus Data

The data in the table below is provided by CSCJES and demonstrates the baseline data of the number of Welsh medium primary schools that had received the Siarter Iaith gold, silver and bronze awards as of September 2022, against the most recent data. Since the beginning of this academic year, 1 additional school has received the silver and 3 additional schools have received the gold.

Table 5.1

Welsh Medium Primary Schools – Siarter Iaith		
	September 2022	July 2023
Bronze	17	17
Silver	12	13
Gold	2	5

The data in the table below is provided by CSCJES and demonstrates the baseline data of the number of Welsh medium secondary schools that had received the Siarter Iaith gold, silver and bronze awards as of September 2022, against the most recent data. Since the beginning of this academic year, 1 additional school has received the bronze award.

Table 5.2

Welsh Medium Secondary Schools – Siarter Iaith		
	September 2022	July 2023
Bronze	1	2
Silver	1	1
Gold	0	0

The data in the table below is provided by CSCJES and demonstrates the baseline data of the number of English medium primary schools that had received the Cymraeg Campus gold, silver and bronze awards as of September 2022, against the most recent data. Since the beginning of this academic year, 8 additional schools have achieved the bronze award, 10 schools have achieved the silver award and 2 schools have achieved the gold award.

Table 5.3

English Medium Primary Schools – Cymraeg Campus		
	September 2022	July 2023
Bronze	32	40
Silver	0	10
Gold	0	2

The data in the table below is provided by CSCJES and demonstrates the baseline data of the number of English medium secondary schools that had received the Cymraeg Campus gold, silver and bronze awards as of September 2022, against the most recent data. Since the beginning of this academic year, 4 additional schools have received the bronze award.

Table 5.4

English Medium Secondary Schools – Cymraeg Campus		
	September 2022	July 2023
Bronze	1	5
Silver	0	0
Gold	0	0

During the first year of the WESP, the Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus provision was extended to include special schools and units in RCT. CSCJES Improvement Partners have worked with schools and units to support the roll out of the programme. The data in the table below demonstrates the baseline data of the number of special schools/units that had received the Cymraeg Campus gold, silver and bronze awards as of September 2022, against the most recent data. Since the beginning of this academic year, 3 schools have received the bronze award.

Table 5.5

English Medium Special Schools/Units – Cymraeg Campus		
	September 2022	July 2023
Bronze	0	3
Silver	0	0
Gold	0	0

There are 17 Welsh medium primary schools in RCT. All Welsh medium primary schools in RCT have now engaged with the Siarter Iaith programme and all have received the bronze award. There are 4 Welsh medium secondary schools in RCT, all of which have now engaged with the Siarter Iaith programme.

There are a total of 82 English medium primary schools in RCT. Of these 82 schools, there are 6 English medium primary schools yet to engage with provision. There are 13 English medium secondary/although schools in RCT. Of these 13 schools, 4 are yet to engage with provision.

The schools yet to engage were invited to an 'Introduction to Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus' session hosted by CSCJES in the spring term, whereby the schools were encouraged to engage with the programme. These schools will be targeted again during the 2023-2024 academic year. There are 6 special schools/units in RCT. Of the 6 settings, only 1 has yet to engage. CSCJES Improvement Partners are continuing to work closely with the relevant officers to support engagement and roll out of provision.

OUTCOME SUMMARY

Youth Services

In November 2022, the Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS) launched its 'Your Voice/Eich Llais' survey to capture the views of young people aged 11 – 25. Young people were given the opportunity to complete a series of interactive questions asked on a range of thematic areas using an online survey platform. Almost 5,000 people responded to the survey across schools, colleges, youth clubs and other community settings across the Local Authority. Part of the survey explored respondents' use of the Welsh language and asked the question: *Would you welcome more opportunities to learn, or use, the Welsh language outside of school/in your free time in any of these places?* The options of places included: online, libraries, art clubs, sports clubs, during school holidays, youth clubs, after school clubs.

The outcome of this survey shows that respondents would like more opportunities to learn and use the language online, at sport clubs and at after school clubs. This data will be used by YEPS to inform future planning of Welsh medium opportunities in RCT and to improve the way YEPS and partner organisations deliver services for young people in the area.

The YEPS team, Menter Iaith and the Urdd have met regularly throughout this academic year to co-produce opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts. YEPS received funding via the Youth Support Grant to support a range of activities which was commissioned out to the Urdd and Menter Iaith. The additional funding remaining has been used to increase the number of trips YEPS are able to run which also includes mixed trips to develop conversations in Welsh with learners from English medium schools. These trips will run throughout the school summer holidays.

Partnership Working

The Urdd and Menter Iaith have been working in partnership with Welsh medium secondary schools in RCT to establish Welsh language youth forums in each school. During Year 2 of the WESP, the Urdd and Menter Iaith will build relationships with English medium schools in RCT in order to establish Welsh language forums if there's funding remaining. The Urdd and Menter Iaith have also been working with Coleg y Cymoedd's Bilingual Development Officer to establish Welsh language youth forums at the college which has now been done. The officer has been building a bank of Welsh speakers at the college who are now members of the forum.

The college's Bilingual Development Officer is currently working with the Welsh Language team of each college campus in RCT to create a 'Cwtsh Cymraeg' on each campus. This will be a Welsh language area with a visual focal point for Welsh related activities for learners attending Coleg y Cymoedd campuses. During Year 2 of the WESP, the officer will be recruiting 3 Welsh Language Learner Ambassadors to support with the promotion of Welsh related activities. The college continue to ensure a range of activities and experiences are provided for learners attending the college, these activities include:

- Regular challenges related to the Welsh language for staff and learners on each campus.
- Social activities for Welsh speaking learners.

- Sessions for learners wanting to learn basic level of Welsh.

In our WESP, we committed to strengthening links between the Local Authority and the Urdd to provide learners with a wide range of activities to use the Welsh language in different contexts. The Local Authority's Leisure Services team have been working with the Urdd to deliver sport activities for Welsh medium schools in RCT. Leisure Services now have a Service Level Agreement in place with the Urdd to deliver sporting sessions through the medium of Welsh. Swimming lessons through the medium of Welsh are currently being delivered on a weekly basis every Monday at Llantrisant Leisure Centre and every Tuesday at Rhondda Sports Centre. There are currently over 130 children per week undertaking their swimming lessons through the medium of Welsh at these centres and lessons will also be starting at Aberdare Sobell Leisure Centre soon.

The Urdd host a range of multi-sport activities through the medium of Welsh at the following schools:

- YGG Bodringallt
- YGG Bronllwyn
- YGG Castellau
- Dolau Primary School (dual language)
- Ysgol Garth Olwg
- Ysgol Llanhari
- YGG Llwynceilyn
- YGG Llyn y Forwyn
- YGG Pont Sion Norton
- YGG Tonyrefail
- YGG Ynyswen

The Urdd offer support to every Welsh medium school in RCT to run provision such as Dinnertime Club and School Club. The schools listed below are currently working with the Urdd to deliver this type of provision. The Urdd are prioritising engaging with all Welsh medium schools during the next academic year in order to provide further Welsh medium opportunities across RCT.

List of schools currently engaged with the Urdd:

- YGG Bodringallt
- YGG Bronllwyn
- YGG Castellau
- Dolau Primary School (dual language)
- YGG Evan James
- Ysgol Garth Olwg
- Gwauncelyn Primary (English medium)
- Heol Y Celyn Primary (dual language)
- Ysgol Llanhari
- YGGG Llantrisant
- YGG Llwynceilyn
- YGG Llyn y Forwyn
- YGG Pont Sion Norton
- YGG Tonyrefail
- Tŷ Coch (Special School/Learning Support)
- YGG Ynyswen

The Urdd also provide sport activities outside of the classroom through the delivery of Welsh medium community clubs across RCT. The data in the table below has been provided by the

Urdd and demonstrates the type of classes available and the number of children attending these sessions per week:

Table 5.6

Sport Activity	Numbers Attending
Gymnasteg Garth Olwg	19
Gymnasteg Canolfan Hamdden Rhondda	31
Gymnasteg Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda	16
Nofio Llantrisant	83
Nofio Rhondda	55
Pel-rwyd #FelMerch	6
Rygbï Cwm Rhondda	8
Tenis Taffs Well	10

Evaluation of Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus

Formal evaluation of the Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus programme has not been conducted during year 1 of the WESP. The data available above shows high levels of engagement with the provision demonstrating that all sectors of education are accessing further opportunities to use Welsh in different contexts. A number of English medium primary schools in RCT were contacted to gather information on what the schools are doing to promote the use of the Welsh language. From the responses received, it's evident that the Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus programme is having a positive impact on the increasing use of Welsh in English medium schools. Some of the common themes throughout the responses was the introduction of the Helpwr Heddiw/Helpwr y Dydd initiative and the establishment of Criw Cymraeg. The Helpwr Heddiw initiative is being used across all schools that responded, recognising learners use of Welsh using appropriate sentence patterns for their age. Each school has a Criw Cymraeg focussing on developing and promoting the use of Welsh throughout the school. Criw Cymraeg activities across English medium schools include Welsh playground games, 'Siaradwyr Gymraeg yr Wythnos' certificates for learners who are chosen for their use of Welsh throughout the week and Cegin Cyw at lunchtimes whereby children ask for meals in Welsh. Some of the schools have linked in with Welsh medium schools in RCT to develop Criw Cymraeg activities and in some areas of the county, learners from these schools have attended English medium schools to support learners with the development and use of their Welsh language skills. All schools that responded provide weekly Welsh assemblies introducing the 'word', 'phrase' and 'question' of the week and focusing on different elements of Welsh language, culture and heritage. During year 2 of the WESP, we will evaluate the impact of the programme across all schools in RCT.

Further Opportunities to use Welsh Outside of the Classroom

The Local Authority's Musical Services team have been identifying different ways to promote bilingual opportunities through using musical services. Since the beginning of this academic year, they've had an increase in the number of harp lessons being provided in both Welsh and English medium schools and are currently looking into the feasibility of delivering jazz sessions through the medium of Welsh outside of the school day. Musical Services are engaging with both Welsh and English medium schools to encourage learners who show an aptitude towards playing instruments to take part in the Urdd Eisteddfod and are also looking into establishing a Welsh folk group with the possibility of a performance at the National Eisteddfod which is being held in RCT in 2024.

The Local Authority's Leisure Services have continued to work closely with partners to develop opportunities to introduce the Welsh language into leisure sessions. Menter Iaith have supported

Leisure Services to develop and deliver a bilingual training programme for physical activity. Through partnership working, they have delivered workshops to staff on how the Welsh language can be introduced into traditionally English sporting activities. The programme includes consultation, mentoring, development of new resources and further development of workshops for future rollout. This initiative is in its early stages and will be further developed during Year 2 of the WESP.

Leisure Services have also engaged with community sporting groups across RCT to encourage an uptake in Welsh language community clubs for children. We are pleased to report that Leisure Services have successfully established the first fully Welsh leisure club in RCT and are continuing to work closely with 'Dregiau Dar Football Club' to develop Welsh medium training sessions. The club are developing an under 10s mixed section with 5 volunteers and coaches supporting this. The club have received Sport RCT Accreditation and have an application pending with Sport Wales for the Be Active Wales Fund. As this is the first club of its type in RCT, a case study will be completed in due course with the aim of promoting this wider to encourage more clubs to develop Welsh medium provision.

The Local Authority's Welsh Language Services have been identifying ways in which non-teaching, education based staff can train or upskill themselves so that they can engage with learners through the medium of Welsh. The first area being targeted for support is the Local Authority's Catering Services. The Welsh Language Services team have liaised with Catering Services to identify practical ways of rolling out Welsh lessons to all school-based catering staff. Several challenges were faced with this due to catering staff working shorter hours and the difficulty of finding cover for staff to be released for Welsh lessons. The team have been working closely with the Local Authority's ICT department and have successfully arranged for all school kitchens to be distributed with dedicated tablets. Work is ongoing to explore suitable applications for unique log on, so that the tables can be shared amongst colleagues for the lessons. The Local Authority tutor who will be delivering these lessons has prepared bilingual materials to provide to Catering Services to support them with their Welsh language skills.

The Local Authority's Arts, Culture and Library Services team have been exploring options to develop further opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in community settings. An issue they're currently facing is a lack of providers available who are able to deliver sessions through the medium of Welsh. The team have been promoting the Arts Council of Wales' initiatives to upskill the cultural sector to create more providers who are able to deliver sessions through the medium of Welsh. The Level 1 Welsh e-module which is available to Local Authority employees is being looked into in order to utilise the training available and encourage the freelance artists and organisations that the team work closely with, to undertake the module so that they have an introduction to the Welsh language. Work around these actions are ongoing and will carry on into Year 2 of the WESP.

The National Eisteddfod is being held in RCT in 2024. The Local Authority's Eisteddfod Project team have created a marketing campaign which is currently being implemented in partnership with the National Eisteddfod team. The Eisteddfod launch event was held in the spring term where performers, artists and community groups came together to create a taster session. Further community meetings have been held to engage with the general public. The Local Authority's Eisteddfod team will be consulting with schools in RCT in September 2023 for their input to help shape the Eisteddfod's own school strategy. Promotion and marketing of the National Eisteddfod will be a priority action for Year 2 of the WESP, ensuring all schools across RCT are involved with the activities despite their language category.

Outcome 5 Sub-Group

A sub-group has been established to focus solely on each outcome of the WESP. The sub-groups provide an effective focus for the Local Authority in partnership with external groups and organisations. The sub-group have met virtually on a termly basis to review the actions listed on the Outcome 5 Annual Work Plan and provide updates on any progress made and to discuss next steps for actions, where appropriate. Strong working relationships have been established between partners who are members of the Outcome 5 sub-group which has enabled information, opportunities and best practices to be shared amongst partners.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

We have a dedicated group focussing solely on this outcome. The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing leads this sub-group and membership includes internal representation from Youth Services, Welsh Language Services, Arts and Culture Services along with external representation from partners to include Menter Iaith, Urdd, CSCJES and Coleg y Cymoedd.

The initial sub-group meetings at the beginning of this academic year focussed on developing the work plan which details the overarching targets, the actions and the key activities required to achieve the targets. The Outcome 5 Sub-group meets on a termly basis to review the targets and actions listed on the work plan to provide an opportunity for members to provide updates on any progress made, where appropriate, and to identify ways to move forward with certain actions. These meetings have been held virtually and have had good attendance at each meeting. Many important points have been raised and actioned accordingly. The sub-group lead will review end dates of actions on the work plan to ensure the group remains on targets and in situations where the end date has surpassed, questions will be asked as to why and follow on steps agreed upon to ensure we move forward and don't miss any targets. Following each meeting, minutes of the meeting are shared with members of the sub-group and the 'Progress/Evaluation' column on the work plan is updated with any comments made during the meeting.

OUTCOME LEVEL RISKS

- Lack of qualified Welsh medium staff available to deliver Youth services:
YEPS and partner organisations such as Menter Iaith and the Urdd are facing challenges with recruiting qualified Welsh medium staff to support their services. Members of the sub-group have raised that funding is an issue, as the English medium positions typically offer a higher pay and are therefore more desirable.
- Arts, Culture and Library Services teams initiatives to upskill the cultural sector:
These initiatives are being introduced to create more providers who are able to deliver sessions through the medium of Welsh but are reliant on freelance artists and organisations taking up the offer of Level 1 Welsh e-modules which they may not choose to do. Arts Council Wales information is currently being awaited and this information will impact the likelihood of this target.
- Indicative funding:
The funding received via the Youth Support Grant is indicative and usually runs per annum. This poses a risk as it doesn't provide job security for staff and the quality of candidates may be compromised when only offering time-limited posts due to funding.

- Schools yet to engage with Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus provision:
There are a group of schools who have yet to engage and are reluctant to do so.
- Action short of strike in schools:
This has created some challenges in some school settings for CSCJES Improvement Partners.
- Catering Services upskilling:
Current difficulties and challenges in staff accessing Welsh lessons due to their shorter working hours and the ability to find cover during their working hours for release.

ASSURANCE / MITIGATION ACTION

- Lack of qualified Welsh medium staff available to deliver Youth services:
Partners such as Menter Iaith, YEPS, Coleg y Cymoedd are working collaboratively to try to address the challenges faced with recruitment.
- Arts, Culture and Library Services teams initiatives to upskill the cultural sector:
Arts Council Wales information is currently being awaited and this information will impact the likelihood of this target being achieved.
- Indicative funding:
Partners are sharing resources where possible however this is not fixing the issues. Consider funding streams that last longer than a year to aid retention of staff in these types of positions.
- Schools yet to engage with Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus provision:
CSCJES are targeting these specific schools during the next academic year to get them onboard following attempts this year via the 'Introduction to Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus' sessions.
- Action short of strike in schools:
The impact of ASOS on developments will continue to be monitored.
- Catering Services upskilling:
Work ongoing to find practical ways to introduce sessions for these staff without financial implications that the Local Authority cannot commit to.

Outcome 6

An increase in the provision of Welsh-medium education for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) in accordance with the duties imposed by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018

KEY ANNUAL DATA

PLASC Data

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and demonstrates the number and percentage of learners with ALN in English medium schools in RCT for the previous five academic years, up to and including the academic year 2022-2023. The data demonstrates a decrease in the number of learners with ALN in English medium education between the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. The percentage of learners for this academic year has increased slightly, however still remains significantly lower than previous years.

Table 6.1

Number and Percentage of Learners in English Medium Education with ALN										
Academic Year										
Year	2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
Total No. with ALN	7,494	24.3%	6,283	20.3%	5,310	17%	1,508	4.87%	1,926	6.28%

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and demonstrates the number and percentage of learners with ALN in Welsh medium schools across the RCT for the previous five academic years, up to and including the academic year 2022-2023. The data demonstrates the same trend within both Welsh and English medium education whereby the percentage of learners with ALN in Welsh medium education has decreased between the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. The percentage of learners for this academic year has increased slightly, however still remains significantly lower than previous years.

Table 6.2

Number and Percentage of Learners in Welsh Medium Education with ALN										
Academic Year										
Year	2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
Total No. with ALN	1,478	20.17%	1,367	18.57%	1,090	14.83%	200	2.77%	256	3.58%

OUTCOME SUMMARY

The Sufficiency of Welsh Medium Additional Learning Provision in our Locality

In line with the duties placed upon us section 63 of the Additional Learning Needs Act and the Education Tribunal (Wales) 2018 Act, the Local Authority's Access and Inclusion team have carried out a review of the additional learning provision currently available in Welsh medium early years settings in RCT. To complete these reviews, the team engaged with 15 Welsh medium registered education providers and asked for surveys to be completed. Out of the 15 settings, 13 settings engaged with the survey. The surveys demonstrated the following strengths:

- 100% of settings have a designated ALNCo.
- 12/13 settings have an agreed graduated response with clear areas of good practice in relation to multi-agency collaboration, use of assessment data and PCP.

The barriers reported by settings were similar across all responses received:

- Lack of available resources in Welsh.
- Recruiting Welsh speaking staff.
- Limited Welsh language abilities of parents/carers to support at home.

Of the 13 settings which engaged with the survey, 12 agreed that support available to them was good from a range of professionals. However, the support provided to settings is delivered predominantly by non-Welsh speaking specialist staff within ALN services.

Potential areas for development:

- Review service delivery within education ALN services with the aim of increasing the Welsh medium specialist support available to Welsh medium early years settings.
- Identify key resources that are not available in Welsh for early years settings on a local basis and in collaboration with other Local Authorities in the region.

Please see report below '*Review of Welsh Medium Early Years ALP – Registered Education Providers*' for more detail.



Review of Welsh
medium Early Years A

The Access and Inclusion team have carried out reviews of the sufficiency of Welsh medium ALN provision in education settings across RCT to support learners with ALN. The first step was to review the additional learning needs of Welsh medium learners with ALN who access support via the Local Authority's Access and Inclusion Services.

At the current time, there is sufficient coverage as each team has Welsh speakers, however not all teams have permanent Welsh essential posts. To safeguard provision, there is a need to ensure that all teams have Welsh essential posts going forward. Over the last three years referrals to the Local Authority's Learner Support Service have doubled in number. Further analysis is required to analyse whether the increase in the number of referrals are from Welsh medium schools as this would demonstrate an increased demand for Welsh medium ALN specialist services. Current data indicates that some learners with significant and complex ALN who were previously attending Welsh medium education in RCT are now accessing specialist education provision.

Potential areas for development:

- Ensure all teams in each service area have Welsh essential posts.
- Analyse demand for Welsh medium support from Access and Inclusion Service areas to increase the number of Welsh essential posts where there is the highest demand.
- To bring forward proposals to Cabinet to establish primary Welsh medium learning support class provision to encourage pupils with significant and complex ALN to continue their education through the medium of Welsh.

An audit of the additional learning needs of learners in Welsh medium mainstream education has been conducted to analyse the different types of additional learning needs learners have in each National Curriculum year. The findings of the audit have informed initial planning of provision in terms of the main focus being on the opening of a new Welsh medium learning support class which will open to learners from September 2024.

Proposed action moving forward:

A further audit is needed to include analysis of severity of need – e.g., eligibility criteria for specialist placement to inform short to medium term planning for development of Welsh medium specialist provision. A detailed Audit of ALN data within the WM sector has been undertaken.

A further audit has been carried out focussing on the provision maps of Welsh medium schools in order to evaluate the range of additional learning provision available and the impact of this. The audit highlighted areas of good practice and areas for development in relation to the quality of schools' additional learning provision and the impact of this for learners.

Potential areas for development:

- Identify key evidence-based interventions/resources that are not available in Welsh that would improve the additional learning provision offer in Welsh medium schools on a local basis in RCT and with other Local Authorities in the region.
- Explore opportunities for the development and adaptation of Welsh medium ALN interventions/resources on an all Wales basis, involving Welsh Government.
- Identify support for Welsh medium schools to ensure effective provision mapping to meet individual pupils' needs.

Please see report below '*Welsh Medium Provision Map Report*' for full detail.



Welsh Medium
Provision Map report

The Access and Inclusion team have been working collaboratively with Coleg y Cymoedd to carry out a scoping exercise of the post-16 Welsh medium provision currently being offered to learners at the college. This scoping exercise identified current Welsh medium/bilingual courses on offer and highlighted potential areas for development.

Potential areas for development:

- Work collaboratively with Coleg y Cymoedd to keep the Welsh medium ALN curriculum offer under review and informed by the needs of Welsh medium ALN learners identified through the transition process.
- Establish an agreed graduated response to meeting the needs of post-16 Welsh medium ALN learners and thresholds for support from the Local Authority.

- Ensure that the development of post-16 processes for accessing Welsh medium additional learning provision at Coleg y Cymoedd is included in the RCT post-16 steering group Year 1 Action Plan.
- Develop consistent approaches and protocols in relation to securing additional learning provision for Welsh medium post-16 further education learners with Coleg Merthyr.

Please see report below '*Scoping Exercise of post-16 Welsh medium provision Coleg y Cymoedd*' for further detail.



Scoping exercise of post-16 Welsh mediu

The Access and Inclusion team work provide Welsh medium Educational Psychology Services provided to Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. Processes are being developed for post-16 ALN provision in further education in collaborating with the psychology service.

The Access and Inclusion team have been working with CSCJES to ensure effective ALN provision is available for learners in mainstream education and special schools and classes in RCT. Improvements have been made to the self-evaluation processes to ensure information regarding ALN forms part of each schools' monitoring, evaluation and review cycle. A new process has been agreed to implement a joint professional development opportunity and quality assurance process to ensure a shared understanding between Access and Inclusion services, CSCJES Improvement Partners, Headteachers, ALN Co-Ordinators and Governors regarding effective self-evaluation of ALN. This will include:

- Guidance for mainstream schools on effective self -evaluation of ALN (from September 2023).
- Training on effective self-evaluation for CSCJES Improvement Partners, Headteachers, ALNCos and Governors (from September 2023).
- Support and oversight by CSCJES Improvement Partners as part of their quality assurance processes – ongoing throughout academic year.
- Designated joint Access and Inclusion services and CSCJES meetings to discuss good practice and concerns to inform support for individual schools.

These audits and reviews which have been conducted during the first year of the WESP will be used to inform future planning of additional learning provision across RCT.

Development of Welsh Medium ALN Provision in our Locality

The Access and Inclusion team have been working closely with Ysgol Garth Olwg for the opening of a new Welsh medium Learning Support Class (LSC) provision for Key Stage 3 and 4 learners at the school. Provision was due to open to learners from September 2022 however, there have been many barriers due to not being able to recruit a specialist teacher. Recruitment for this post has been advertised numerous times throughout the academic year however the number of applicants and quality of the applications has been low. In recent months, appointment has been successful following readvertisement of the post as a secondment. Due to the delay in the appointment, a high level of ALN specific training and mentoring will be provided to the staff on an ongoing basis and evaluated through the Learning Support Class Quality Assurance protocol. This provision will open to learners from September 2023.

Proposals for the establishment of Welsh medium ALN provision in the new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin were previously listed as Year 2 to 3 actions however, to ensure we work at greater pace in response to identified need, the proposals have been brought forward. The proposals

were presented to Cabinet for approval in May 2023 and consultation is now underway. If the consultation is successful, 2 new Welsh medium primary phase LSCs will be established in the new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin which will open to learners in 2024, enhancing its Welsh medium specialist ALN placement provision.

The Sufficiency of Welsh Medium ALN Workforce Available

A review has been carried out on the size and capability of the workforce available to deliver Welsh medium early years ALN provision, analysing ALNCo training for this age group to identify what training is available and whether it's being accessed. The analysis highlighted that a wide range of training is provided for settings through formal training sessions, drop-in sessions and forum sessions. Training is available for specific interventions in relation to individual learners. The analysis showed that attendance at training is variable with less than 50% of settings attending training opportunities relation to the new ALN system and inclusive practices. It also highlighted that the training and resources available are only available in English due to a lack of Welsh medium ALN specialist staff available to support early years settings.

Potential areas for development:

- Prioritise training opportunities that can be delivered through the medium of Welsh.
- Offer Welsh medium training to settings and analyse potential uptake.
- Explore establishing cross-border Welsh medium early years ALNCo forums and training opportunities with neighbouring Local Authorities.

The Access and Inclusion team consulted with Welsh medium ALNCoS and Welsh medium staff within the Local Authority's Access and Inclusion services to gather information on the barriers to providing effective Welsh medium additional learning needs provision. The consultation was held through focus groups which had 17 participants: 8 Welsh medium ALNCoS, 2 Welsh medium educational psychologists, 1 assistant Educational Psychologist, 6 members of the Learner Support Service and the additional learning provision team who work through the medium of Welsh in Welsh medium schools.

The consultation focussed on two main areas:

- 1) Perceived barriers to providing effective Welsh medium additional learning provision in RCT.
- 2) Possible solutions to overcoming barriers to providing effective Welsh medium ALP in RCT.

The focus group identified the following barriers:

- Lack of Welsh medium resources.
- Lack of appropriately trained/skilled staff.
- Limited opportunities for Welsh medium continuous professional development.
- Lack of Welsh medium specialist placement provision – e.g., Learning Support Classes in RCT.
- Parents having difficulty providing support.
- Lack of value placed upon the Welsh language – lack of equity.

Possible solutions identified included:

- Increase in the number of Welsh medium staff in Access and Inclusion services.
- Recognition of the value of the language.
- Increased funding and more Welsh medium resources.
- Provision of Welsh medium continuous professional development opportunities.
- Increased Welsh medium Learning Support Classes provision.
- Welsh language parent support groups.

Further consultation was carried out to identify barriers ALNCoS and other school-based staff face with providing effective Welsh medium additional learnings needs provision. To conduct the consultation, a focus group was held online with 40 participants in attendance from specialist teams.

The consultation focussed on two main areas:

- 1) Perceived barriers to providing effective Welsh medium additional learning provision in RCT.
- 2) Possible solutions to overcoming barriers to providing effective Welsh medium ALP in RCT.

The focus group identified the following barriers:

- Recruitment of Welsh medium ALN staff.
- Skillset of existing school staff in mainstream Welsh medium schools.
- Lack of specialist Welsh medium placement provision – e.g., Learning Support Classes.
- Budget restraints restricting ability of staff to improve their Welsh language skills.
- SEBD dual placement model – Welsh medium learners having to attend part-time English medium specialist placement.
- Lack of Welsh medium ALN resources.

Possible solutions identified included:

- Recognition of increase in central Welsh speaking ALN staff.
- Equity of provision – increasing specialist provision.
- Provision mapping and skills audit of Welsh medium schools regarding ALN.
- Development of Welsh medium resources.

The outcomes of both consultations, in particular the suggested solutions, will be used to identify specific actions to be progressed during year 2 of the WESP.

Audits have been undertaken to identify the Welsh language competency of staff working in all specialist ALN settings in RCT, this includes Learning Support Classes, Pupil Referral Units and special schools. Please see below for an overview of the outcome of the audits and potential follow up actions:

Central Access and Inclusion Services:

- 70% of the staff are at Welsh Language Competency Level 1.
- 10% of staff of the staff are currently at Welsh Language Competency Levels 2-4.
- 20% of the staff are currently at Welsh Language Competency Level 5.

All service areas have Welsh language staff at Level 5 and are able to provide a Welsh medium service with the exception of the early years team and additional learning needs administrative service (ALNAS), which does not work directly with pupils to provide specialist ALN assessment or provision. Despite nearly all service areas/teams within Access and Inclusion having Welsh medium staff, there is a need to ensure all teams have sufficient Welsh essential posts within their structure. Currently not all service areas have Welsh essential posts.

Initial potential areas for development:

- Ensure that all service areas have a Welsh essential post in their structure.
- Analyse demand for Welsh medium support from all service areas to increase the number of Welsh essential posts in specific service areas with the highest demand.

Please see report below '*RCT AI Staff Competency Levels*' for full analysis.



RCT AI Staff
Competency Levels.doc

Learning Support Class Staff:

- Of the 50 LSC teacher responses, 60% are currently at Welsh Language Competency Level 1. This contrasts with the teaching assistants where 89% of the responses indicate that the teaching assistants are currently at Welsh Language Competency Level 1.
- 6% of the teachers indicate a Welsh language Competency Level of 4 with 3% of the teaching assistants reporting the same.
- There are no teachers currently at Welsh Language Competency Level 5 although 1 teaching assistant has identified that they are at this competency level.

Due to no LSC teachers identifying themselves as Level 5, it is not currently possible to develop a succession plan in relation to current LSC teachers taking up Welsh medium posts in our new Welsh medium LSCs and external advertisements will need to be made. It's also apparent that a review of the provision of Welsh language in the curriculum needs to be undertaken in LSCs to ensure compliance with the new curriculum due to the barriers identified by LSC staff.

Initial potential areas for development:

- Explore the feasibility of developing the Welsh language skills of the Level 4 teaching and non-teaching staff to provide enhanced Welsh medium capacity for LSC provision.
- Review delivery of Welsh in the Curriculum for Wales in LSCs to ensure pupils with ALN in English medium LSCs have access to their statutory entitlement for Welsh in line with statutory requirements.

Please see report below '*LSC Staff Competency Levels Summary*' for a more detailed breakdown.



LSC Staff
Competency Level Su

Special Schools and PRU Welsh Language Competency Levels:

- 75% of Special School/PRU teachers are at Welsh Language Competency Level 1 or 2.
- 7% of Special School/PRU teachers are at Welsh Language Competency Level 5.
- 87% of Special School/PRU teaching assistants are at Welsh Language Competency Level 1 or 2.
- 3% of Special School/PRU teaching assistants are at Welsh Language Competency Level 5.

An increase in the number of Welsh speaking staff at Level 5 in special schools/PRUs is needed to enable pupils to access Welsh medium education in these specialist settings with the aim of providing full time access to Welsh medium special school and PRU provision within the special schools/PRUs over time.

Initial potential areas for development:

- Discuss with relevant Local Authority departments on how to incorporate Welsh essential posts into the structure of special schools and PRUs.
- Consider the feasibility of establishing Welsh medium special school hub provision in designated special schools.

Please see report below '*Special School PRUs Competency Levels*' for full breakdown.



Special Schools
PRU's Competency Le

The Sufficiency of Welsh Medium ALN Workforce in Other Service Areas

A key target of Outcome 6 of the WESP is to review and monitor the size and capability of the workforce available in other service areas to ensure there's sufficient workforce available to support Welsh medium ALN provision. We have started to strengthen connections between the Local Authority and the Local Health Board to support us achieving these targets. The Local Health Board created their own Strategic Delivery Plan to identify gaps in Welsh medium provision within the service. This is currently being delivered and a Welsh Language Steering Group has recently been established which is chaired by a board member as the core governance to ensure progress with all aspects of bilingual provision. Summary of the actions carried out during this academic year will be available via the Local Health Board's Annual Welsh Language Standards report which will be available from September 2023.

As part of their internal recruitment and workforce planning to support staff to learn or develop their Welsh language skills, an application has been submitted to the National Centre for Learning Welsh for support. If the application is successful, the Local Health Board will have dedicated support for its staff who wish to improve their skill or confidence in Welsh. Discussions are ongoing with Learn Welsh Glamorgan to provide support opportunities for members of staff who are beginners.

The Local Health Board are implementing changes around their recruitment process. A key change that is being worked on is the introduction of job advertisements being advertised in Welsh for positions where Welsh language skills are required. They have been creating a new job description template which will be used for all future job advertisement. This will include the need for all new members of staff to learn Welsh to Level 1. An assessment tool is now in place to assess the level of Welsh skill needed for all posts. A working group will be established in Year 2 of the WESP to move forward with these actions in line with their action plan.

Outcome 6 Sub-Group

A sub-group has been established to focus solely on each outcome of the WESP. The sub-groups provide an effective focus for the Local Authority in partnership with external groups and organisations. The sub-group have met virtually on a termly basis to review the actions listed on the Outcome 6 Annual Work Plan and provide updates on any progress made and to discuss next steps for actions, where appropriate. The sub-group meetings have provided opportunities for the Local Authority's Access and Inclusion team to work collaboratively with partners such as CSCJES, Coleg y Cymoedd and the Local Health Board to ensure effective Welsh medium ALN provision is available to learners in RCT.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

We have a dedicated group focussing solely on this outcome. The Head of Inclusion Services leads this sub-group and membership includes internal officers from the Access and Inclusion team, representation from the Local Health Board and representation from Welsh medium schools.

The initial sub-group meetings at the beginning of this academic year focussed on developing the work plan which details the overarching targets, the actions and the key activities required to achieve the targets. The Outcome 6 Sub-group meets on a termly basis to review the targets and actions listed on

the work plan to provide an opportunity for members to provide updates on any progress made, where appropriate, and to identify ways to move forward with certain actions. The sub-group lead will review end dates of actions on the work plan to ensure the group remains on targets and in situations where the end date has surpassed, questions will be asked as to why and follow on steps agreed upon to ensure we move forward and don't miss any targets. Following each meeting, minutes of the meeting are shared with members of the sub-group and the 'Progress/Evaluation' column on the work plan is updated with any comments made during the meeting.

OUTCOME LEVEL RISKS

- Recruitment of specialist Welsh medium staff:
This is a risk which is evident at all stages of education from early years through to post-16. The experience we've had of not being able to recruit from the new LSC class at Ysgol Garth Olwg is evidence that this is a serious risk to the ongoing development of Welsh medium ALN provision in RCT.
- Early years ALN staff not sufficiently trained:
The analysis conducted whilst reviewing the sufficiency of the early years ALN workforce highlighted that less than 50% of settings have attended training opportunities in relation to the new ALN system and inclusive practices which demonstrates potential issues with engagement. We can provide the opportunities but cannot force staff to uptake.
- Lack of Welsh medium resources to support services and learners:
This is a common barrier which was identified through the focus groups.

ASSURANCE / MITIGATION ACTION

- Recruitment of specialist Welsh medium staff:
Intervention is needed at a national level to address the challenges being faced with lack of specialist staff available to support ALN services.
- Early years ALN staff not sufficiently trained:
Access and Inclusion services will work more closely with Welsh medium early years settings to promote the training opportunities available and encourage uptake of these opportunities.
- Lack of Welsh medium resources to support services and learners:
Increased funding is needed to create and develop more Welsh medium resources.

Outcome 7

Increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh

KEY ANNUAL DATA

Welsh Language Unit Data

The data in the table that follows is provided by the Local Authority's Welsh Language Unit and outlines the total number and percentage of school-based staff who identified themselves as fluent or fairly fluent in the Welsh language.

Table 7.1

Total Number of Staff who Identified Themselves as Fluent or Fairly Fluent in Welsh							
No. of Staff with Welsh Language Skills		Fluent (Welsh Language Level 4 and 5)		Fairly Fluent (Welsh Language Level 3)		Total (Welsh Language Level 3, 4 and 5)	
Category	Total No. of Staff	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Non-School Based Staff	7,352	660	8.9%	146	2.0%	806	10.9%
Total	12,896	1,530	11.8%	347	2.7%	1,877	14.5%

PLASC DATA

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and outlines the total percentage of teachers employed by the Local Authority who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh for the previous five academic years, up to and including this academic year. The data for 2022-23 demonstrates a drop in the percentage of qualified teachers teaching Welsh as a first language in comparison with 2021-2022, however the data also demonstrates an increase in the number of qualified teachers teaching other subjects through the medium of Welsh and the number of teachers who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh but are not doing so in their current post.

Table 7.2

Total Percentage of Teachers who are able to Teach through the Medium of Welsh					
	Academic Year				
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Qualified Teachers Teaching Welsh as a First Language	10.9%	9.7%	8.8%	14.1%	10.9%
Qualified Teachers Teaching Welsh as a Second Language (Only)	38.6%	39.6%	36.3%	36.3%	36%

Qualified Teachers Teaching Other Subjects through the Medium of Welsh	8.4%	9.7%	11.2%	5.5%	8.7%
Qualified Teachers Able to Teach through the Medium of Welsh, but not doing so	6.3%	3.8%	3.4%	2.9%	4.2%
Not Qualified to Teach through the Medium of Welsh	35.9%	37.2%	40.3%	41.2%	40.2%

SWAC data

Please see Appendix A for SWAC data 2022. Key themes emerging from the data is summarised as follows:

- **Table A.1** outlines the Welsh language ability of practitioners by school phase across all schools in RCT. The highest levels of proficiency in Welsh language was evident in the 40-49 age range with 150 staff members displaying this level of skill. A total of 433 of teachers had no skills in the Welsh language which is a clear area for improvement.
- **Table A.2** identifies teacher Welsh language proficiency by phase. A total of 318 out of the 433 teachers identified as having no Welsh language skills were in the secondary sector, with a further 90 in the all through school sector. This clearly requires targeting.
- **Table A.3** shows the Welsh language abilities of practitioners teaching Welsh as a subject only at primary level. Data for 2022 demonstrates that 155 out of 598 of teachers in English medium primary schools teaching Welsh as a subject had only entry level skills, suggesting that this is an area for further development.
- **Table A.4** identifies the Welsh language ability of teachers in English medium schools (years 7-14) by main subject. 15.2% had intermediate level skills (W4), 20.6% had advanced skills (W5) and 44.7% were proficient (W6).
- **Table A.5** identifies the Welsh language ability of teachers in English medium schools (years 7-14) by all subjects taught. 17% has intermediate skills (W4), 24% had advanced skills and 52% were proficient (W6).
- **Table A.6** contains data on the Welsh language ability of teachers teaching through the medium of Welsh across all schools in RCT, split by school phase. A total of 5 had foundation level skills (4 primary, 1 PRU) and had 4 intermediate skills (3 primary and 1 secondary). A total of 68 had advanced skills, and 368 were deemed to be proficient (114 in primary, 117 in through/middle schools and 136 in secondary schools).
- **Table A.7** illustrates the Welsh language ability of those teaching through the medium of Welsh by their main subject. A total of 21 teachers of science and 25 in mathematics were deemed to be proficient in Welsh which is relatively low. A further teacher of mathematics teaching through the medium of Welsh was deemed to have advanced level skills.
- **Table A.8** identifies the Welsh language ability of those teaching through the medium of Welsh in all subjects taught. The data highlights that there are 532 teachers teaching through the medium of Welsh in all subjects taught (3 with intermediate, 28 with advanced and 501 with proficient level skills).
- **Table A.9** outlines the Welsh language ability of ALN Co-ordinators across all schools in RCT, split by school phase. Of the 16 ALNCoS, 2 have advanced skills and 14 have proficient skills.
- **Table A.10** outlines the Welsh language ability of ALN support staff across all schools in RCT, split by school phase. Of these support staff, 36 have no skills and 44 have entry level skills suggesting that there is potential scope for supporting these staff to further improve their Welsh language skills.
- **Table A.11** demonstrates the Welsh language ability of the Local Authority's school-based workforce for the academic year 2020/21 – 2021/22. Data suggests that there has been a

reduction in the number of staff with no Welsh language skills (from 21.2% in 2020-2021 to 20.7 in 2021-2022) and a slight growth of 0.6% and 1.9% in staff with entry level and foundation level skills respectively during the same period. Small gains were evident in advanced level skills (0.2%) but a small reduction was evident in the percentage of staff deemed to be proficient in the Welsh language during the same period (reduction of 1.6%).

- **Table A.12** outlines the total number of school-based workforce (including headteachers, school teachers and school learning support workers) employed by the Local Authority, teaching/working through the medium of Welsh for the academic year 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Data highlights a small reduction in the percentage working through the medium of Welsh in their current post (a drop of 0.4%) and a slight reduction of 0.3% in the percentage being able to teach and work through the medium of Welsh but were not doing so.

ITRENT data

The datasets below are derived from the Local Authority's internal HR systems and demonstrate movement of teachers in Welsh medium education in terms of recruitment and retention. Data demonstrates that 43 Welsh medium practitioners were recruited in RCT during the academic year 2022-2023.

Table 7.3

Starters	Total
Headteacher	0
Assistant/Deputy Headteacher	0
Teacher Threshold	9
Teacher Main Scale	32
Instructor/Unqualified Teacher	2
Total	43

When comparing this against the total number of Welsh medium practitioners who terminated their employment during the academic year 2022-2023, data demonstrates a net loss of 2 practitioners across RCT.

Table 7.4

Leavers	Number	%
Headteacher	3	10.0%
Assistant/Deputy Headteacher	1	2.9%
Teacher - Threshold	18	8.5%
Teacher - Main Scale	23	23.0%
Instructor/Unqualified Teacher	0	0.0%
Total	45	11.8%

The data gathered on the reasons for leaving teaching posts (Table 7.5) demonstrates that the over 50% of practitioners left voluntarily, 17.8% reached the end of their contract, 13.3% left through mutual agreement and 8.9% transferred to another local authority.

Table 7.5

Reasons for Leaving	Number	%
Age Retirement	1	2.2%
Compulsory Redundancy and Pension Access	1	2.2%
Compulsory Redundancy No Pension Access	1	2.2%
Death in Service	1	2.2%
End of Contract	8	17.8%
Mutual Agreement	6	13.3%
Transfer To Another Local Authority	4	8.9%
Voluntary	23	51.1%
Total	45	

The data available can also be broken down to age profiles of practitioners starting and leaving posts. The data in the tables below demonstrates that the 25-34 age category had the highest percentage of starters and the highest percentage of leavers, leaving a net loss of 3 practitioners within this age category for the academic year 2022-2023. Further improvement in retaining staff is required if we are to satisfactorily grow the education workforce.

Table 7.6

Age Profile/Breakdown of Starters	21-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Number of Starters	14	20	6	3	0	0
Percentage of Starters	32.6%	46.5%	14.0%	7.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 7.7

Age Profile/Breakdown of Leavers	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Number of Leavers	2	23	7	4	9	0
Percentage of Leavers	4.4%	51.1%	15.6%	8.9%	20.0%	0.0%

Welsh Development Programmes Data

The data in the table below is provided by CSCJES and demonstrates the number of RCT practitioners undertaking the Welsh in a Year Sabbatical Scheme for the previous four academic years, up to and including 2022-2023.

Table 7.8

Welsh in a Year Sabbatical Scheme				
Year	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Number	5	3	1	2

The Welsh in a Year Sabbatical Scheme will end this academic year and will be replaced with the new Two Term and One Term Sabbatical Schemes. The data in the table below shows the number of RCT practitioners that have undertaken these courses this year.

Table 7.9

Number of RCT Practitioners Undertaking the One and Two Term Sabbatical Scheme		
Scheme	Two Term 2022-2023	One Term 2022-2023
Number	4	4

The data in the table that follows demonstrates the number of RCT practitioners undertaking Welsh language professional learning courses to develop their Welsh language skills, linked to the Welsh Language Competency Framework.

Table 7.10

Number of Practitioners Undertaking Welsh Language Professional Learning Course	
Number	7

The data in the table that follows is provided by CSCJES and outlines the number of senior leaders who attended the Consortium's 'Leading Welsh Strategically in School' programme for the previous three academic years, up to and including the academic year 2022-2023.

Table 7.11

Leadership of Welsh in English Medium Schools			
Year	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Number	8	6	5

The data in the table below has been provided by CSCJES and outlines the number of Welsh medium candidates receiving NPQH for the previous four academic years, up to and including the academic year 2022-2023.

Table 7.12

Number of Welsh Medium Candidates Achieving NPQH				
Year	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Number	0	0	2	2

The data in the table below is gathered by CSCJES and demonstrates the number of Welsh medium RCT practitioners undertaking the Aspiring Headteachers Programme for the previous four academic years, up to and including 2022-2023.

Table 7.13

Numbers on the Aspiring Headteachers Programme				
Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
No. of Primary Schools	1	No course.	3	1
No. of Middle Schools	2		0	0
No. of Secondary Schools	0		1	1

The data in the table that follows is provided by CSCJES and outlines the number of Welsh medium practitioners undertaking the Middle Leaders Development Programme for the previous four academic years, up to and including the academic year 2022-2023.

Table 7.14

Numbers Undertaking Middle Leaders Development Programme				
Year	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
No. of Primary Schools	11	0	2	1
No. of Secondary Schools	0	0	1	7
No. of All Through Schools	1	2	1	0
Total	12	2	4	8

The data in the table below is provided by CSCJES and outlines the number of Welsh medium practitioners undertaking the Senior Leaders Development Programme for the previous three academic years, up to and including the academic year 2022-2023. This programme did not begin until the year 2020-2021 therefore this is the only data available.

Table 7.15

Numbers Undertaking Senior Leaders Development Programme			
Year	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
No. of Primary Schools	1	0	0
No. of Secondary Schools	1	2	1
No. of All Through Schools	2	2	1
Total	4	4	2

Open University Data

The data in the table below has been provided by the Open University and demonstrates the number of Welsh medium schools in RCT supporting students into teaching positions through alternative routes (ITE partnerships, Open University salaried route). The date input into the 'Qualifying' column is the expected date that each student will be qualified by.

Table 7.16

Number of Welsh Medium Schools in RCT Supporting Students into Teaching Roles via Alternative Routes into Teaching		
School	Numbers	Qualifying
Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun	1	July 2024
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Evan James	1	July 2023
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda	1	July 2024
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Bronllwyn	1	Awaiting outcome

OUTCOME SUMMARY

Data Returns

To ensure accurate data is collected on the number of vacancies in the Local Authority across primary, secondary, special and ability, CSCJES and RCT Education Data team have been working with schools and practitioners to support accurate return of the SWAC through activities such as:

- CSC have created and published a playlist incorporating an explanatory video which focuses on schools' procedures for planning professional learning and accurately reporting on practitioner development in the SWAC.
- RCT Education Data team have provided workshops to support schools in completing their SWAC returns.

We will continue to work in partnership with CSCJES to ensure that schools' SWAC data accurately reflects practitioners' Welsh language skills and reflects the true skills of staff. Revised guidance on SWAC data has been devised and CSCJES and the Local Authority's Education Data team will actively engage with schools in RCT to ensure accurate completion on the SWAC to inform future planning.

In addition to SWAC datasets, further analysis of key datasets has been undertaken to inform strategic planning. For example, the Council's Human Resources information management system has been used to inform strategic planning. Data from the iTrent System, PLASC and SWAC have been used to identify staffing pressures across the education workforce and the data has been shared and presented to the Education and Inclusion Service Scrutiny Committee.

The data highlights the staffing pressures across the system and potential areas for further development. These include:

- Growing the number of central staff who identify themselves as fluent and fairly fluent Welsh speakers;
- Strengthening a range of partnerships and strategic interventions to grow the number of qualified teachers who are able to teach Welsh as a first language;
- Providing effective support and professional learning opportunities for qualified teachers who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh but are not doing so currently;
- Targeting the workforce who have 'no skills' or 'entry level skills' in the Welsh language and ensuring that they are supported to develop their Welsh language skills;
- Ensuring that teachers who teach in the English medium sector and have intermediate or advanced Welsh language skills have opportunities to access the necessary professional learning and support to become proficient so that they are able to teach through the medium of Welsh should they wish to do so;
- Ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities for staff with Welsh language skills to access the right leadership pathways to progress in their careers; and
- Promoting and growing the numbers of staff accessing alternative routes into teaching.
- Investing in careers advice and guidance for young people so that they see working within education as a potential and rewarding career choice.

Progress Made Against Increasing the Workforce

All four Welsh medium secondary schools in RCT have partnerships with local universities to provide opportunities for students. Strategic initiatives aimed at encouraging the development of alternative routes into teaching in the Welsh medium sector will continue using effective promotion and marketing opportunities. Current successful partnerships include the:

- Ysgol Garth Olwg and YG Rhydywaun partnership with Cardiff Metropolitan University to support delivery of the ITE programme.
- Ysgol Llanhari and YG Cwm Rhondda partnership with University of Wales Trinity Saint David to support delivery of teaching programmes for students.

There have been some successes relating to the Open University salaried route into teaching but this requires further development and expansion.

The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol have several projects ongoing aimed at teacher training such as the 'Dysgu'r Dyfodol' project which is targeted at Welsh speaking undergraduate students at any University studying any subject and in any year of their studies. Students on this programme will be matched with an early career teacher for mentoring and work experience opportunities. The Coleg are tracking progression of these students once they've completed their studies to identify whether they transfer into teaching positions. The project started in January 2023 and 50 applications were received for this academic year.

CSCJES and regional Headteachers have been working with Cardiff Metropolitan University and Welsh Government to explore potential new routes to achieving qualified teacher status (QTS) for practitioners with experience in an education setting (high level teaching assistants, FE lecturers).

Welsh Government have agreed in principle a new fast track route to QTS for Welsh medium practitioners. The programme is currently being developed by Cardiff Metropolitan University with the aim of launching during 2023-2024.

The Local Authority's Workforce Development team are currently working on a targeted campaign to promote teaching as a profession. The team are creating a 'Teaching as a Profession' section on the Local Authority's new careers portal which will include information on the profession, the different routes available, support available for current practitioners looking to be supported into Welsh medium education, video clips of RCT practitioners talking about their experiences working in the profession. The Workforce Development team have been out to Welsh medium schools to hold video sessions, engaging with Welsh medium practitioners to promote the benefits of teaching as a profession and specifically through the medium of Welsh. Once completed, further marketing strategies will be deployed to ensure that it reaches the right target audience.

There are 2 schools in RCT which have supported students at Cardiff Metropolitan University on the PGCE Pontio group. This group is a short course aimed at developing confidence and use of Welsh to encourage student teachers to transfer into job opportunities in Welsh medium education. One further school has worked with Cardiff Metropolitan University to place a student on the 'Blas ar Ddysgu' programme which is a week taster in a Welsh medium school, aimed at undergraduate students from Cardiff Metropolitan University and Cardiff University.

The Sufficiency of Welsh Medium ALN Workforce Available

A review has been carried out on the size and capability of the workforce available to deliver Welsh medium early years ALN provision. A full and comprehensive analysis of this work is provided in Outcome 6.

Leadership Development

The Local Authority is proactive in developing its leadership capacity by running an annual Aspiring Leaders Programme. This programme is highly effective and is commissioned by the Local Authority as part of its succession planning strategy and was identified by Estyn as innovative practice in the Local Authority inspection in January 2023 and a best practice case study was requested and written. This annual programme includes aspiring leaders from the Welsh medium sector and every effort is made to encourage and secure good representation from the sector to involve senior leaders with Welsh language skills. There are currently 2 Welsh Medium practitioners enrolled on the 2023-2024 programme. Consideration is now being given to developing a Local Authority course for middle leaders to ensure earlier identification of potential future leaders, and funding has been secured to pilot this programme for a 12 month period.

CSCJES have widely promoted the NPQH and Aspiring Headteacher Programme via all communication channels and through Improvement Partner conversations with schools. Data on the numbers undertaking these programmes is detailed in Table 7.12 and 7.13 respectively. The numbers accessing these leadership programmes will require further growth during 2023/24 if we are to ensure sufficient future leadership capacity within RCT.

The Gyda'n Gilydd programme, which is a leadership programme made up of Welsh medium practitioners across the region, has 3 RCT practitioners on the current programme for 2022-2023.

The National Programme for Senior Leaders is delivered by Ysgol Llanhari on behalf of CSCJES. Data on the numbers undertaking leadership development programmes are referred to above in Table 7.15. A dip was evident in 2022-23 and further promotional work will be required in future to ensure a growth in numbers in the Welsh medium sector.

CSCJES held Governor training sessions during the summer term 2022 and the spring term 2023, focussing on enhancing awareness on the responsibility around the Welsh language. 14 governors attended and are now equipped to support school leaders. Further awareness raising on the WESP for governing bodies will be provided during 2023/24 academic year through chair of governors meetings with the Director of Education and her leadership team and via Director reports to governing bodies during the academic year.

Partnership Working to Upskill Staff

The Local Authority has been working with internal service areas and external partners to support school-based staff in improving their Welsh language skills.

CSCJES have been planning Welsh language development for practitioners strategically using the Welsh language competency framework and linking it to the SWAC. CSCJES have widely promoted their professional learning opportunities for the Welsh language via all communication channels and via Improvement Partner conversations with schools. During the academic year 2022-2023, 7 Welsh medium practitioners undertook Welsh language professional learning courses through CSCJES to develop their Welsh language skills, linked to the Welsh Language Competency Framework.

The Local Authority's Welsh Language Services are working with the Local Authority's ICT department for the secure roll out of different electronic applications to support the linguistic skill development of staff. If the roll out is successful, the applications will be placed on the devices of all Local Authority based staff in the first instance. Further work is needed to identify ways to successfully roll out the applications to school-based staff as not all members of staff use Local Authority devices. The Local Authority's Catering Services are the first cohort of school-based staff which will pilot the roll out of support.

Welsh Government's Hwb portal has been promoted with RCT schools and WESP partners via general communication channels. The portal includes a range of professional learning opportunities available for practitioners to develop their Welsh language skills.

The free resources available via Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to support staff with upskilling their Welsh language skills, have been shared with RCT schools and WESP partners via general communication channels:

- To enhance language skills - [Gloywi Iaith \(porth.ac.uk\)](http://porth.ac.uk)
- Interactive learning resources for developing Welsh language skills in the context of the classroom - [Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol : Adnoddau Iaith i Athrawon](#)
- Support material for teaching Welsh as a second language - [Blackboard Learn \(porth.ac.uk\)](http://porth.ac.uk) (need to register to access the resource)
- App Sgiliau Iaith - Search for 'Sgiliaith' on App store or Playstore.

CSCJES have been proactive in rolling out and promoting the support available to practitioners via the Welsh Sabbatical Schemes. Data on the numbers undertaking the sabbatical schemes for this academic year and previous years is referred to above in Table 7.8 and Table 7.9. The Welsh in a Year Sabbatical scheme will end this year and be replaced with the new One Term and Two Term Sabbatical schemes. CSCJES are currently recruiting for the following sabbatical courses which will take place in summer 2024:

- 5 week entry level course for teaching assistants
- 8 week foundation level course for teachers

The opportunities available have been widely promoted by CSCJES and the Local Authority's Education team.

CSCJES provide post-sabbatical scheme support which includes network meetings, sharing of good practice and resources, leadership of Welsh short course, bespoke 1:1 session with development officers and support to share their knowledge and skills with other practitioners. This will continue in 2023-2024 for practitioners returning to school from September 2023.

Outcome 7 Sub-Group

A sub-group has been established to focus solely on each outcome of the WESP. The sub-groups provide an effective focus for the Local Authority in partnership with external groups and organisations. The sub-group have met virtually on a termly basis to review the actions listed on the Outcome 7 Annual Work Plan and provide updates on any progress made and to discuss next steps for actions, where appropriate. Throughout the first year of this plan, as discussions have broadened membership has grown to include key partners such as Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. There has been regional work underway to support the activities in relation to this outcome which has been widely promoted by CSCJES and the Local Authority's Education team. An action for Year 2 of the plan will be to link with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to further enhance our actions around this outcome.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

We have a dedicated group focussing solely on this outcome. The Director of Education and Inclusion Services leads this sub-group and membership includes internal officers, CSCJES, representation from both Welsh and English medium schools and Coleg y Cymoedd and representation from external partners to include Mudiad Meithrin, Welsh Government and Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

The initial sub-group meetings at the beginning of this academic year focussed on developing the work plan which details the overarching targets, the actions and the key activities required to achieve the targets. The Outcome 7 Sub-group meets on a termly basis to review the targets and actions listed on the work plan to provide an opportunity for members to provide updates on any progress made, where appropriate, and to identify ways to move forward with certain actions. These meetings have been held virtually and have had good attendance at each meeting. Many important points have been raised and actioned accordingly. The sub-group lead will review end dates of actions on the work plan to ensure the group remains on targets and in situations where the end date has surpassed, questions will be asked as to why and follow on steps agreed upon to ensure we move forward and don't miss any targets. Following each meeting, minutes of the meeting are shared with members of the sub-group and the 'Progress/Evaluation' column on the work plan is updated with any comments made during the meeting.

OUTCOME LEVEL RISKS

- **Inaccurate SWAC returns:**
Schools not completing the SWAC return accurately, providing inaccurate data to inform future education planning.
- **Lack of Welsh medium teachers and support staff:**
There's a lack of Welsh speaking teachers and support staff available to fill posts in schools across RCT, especially in certain subject areas. This is national issue but geographically we have additional challenges.

- Low number of applicants for teaching courses at universities:

It's been reported that the numbers applying for teaching courses at Cardiff Metropolitan University are lower than previous years.

- High numbers of practitioners leaving the profession:

Data trends demonstrate a number of teachers and support staff are leaving the profession completely. We do however appear to have some success in recruiting but due to the number of staff leaving the our employment, the net gain is negligible. RCT experienced very high covid rates and death rates were the highest in Wale and the impact on the wider community and on the resilience of the workforce could be an issue. Retaining young professionals in the sector appear to be a particular challenge.

- Geographical location of RCT:

Due to where the county is situated geographically, this prevents some qualified practitioners who reside in neighbouring counties to travel to our schools for work due to greater employment opportunities being closer to home. Retention of staff therefore is an important consideration.

- Succession Planning:

Age profiles of the school-based workforce needs to be analysed at regular intervals in order to assist with strategic planning.

ASSURANCE / MITIGATION ACTION

- Inaccurate SWAC returns:

- CSCJES have created and published a playlist incorporating an explanatory video which focuses on schools' procedures for planning professional learning and accurately reporting on practitioner development in the SWAC.
- RCT Education Data team have provided workshops to support schools in completing their SWAC returns.
- Support will be ongoing into Year 2 of the plan whilst schools are preparing their SWAC returns for 2023.

- Lack of Welsh medium teachers and support staff:

- Implementing a workforce development campaign focusing specifically on the benefits of teaching or working within education in RCT.
- Links between local Welsh medium schools, local Universities and Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to be strengthened to ensure students transfer into teaching opportunities once they've completed their studies.
- Stronger links have been established with careers initiatives and more is being done to highlight the benefits of working within education and the different routes into teaching.
- More high potential staff to be encouraged to engage with leadership programmes so that we have sufficient supply of high calibre leaders to meet future demand.

- Low number of applicants for teaching courses at Universities:

Links between local Welsh medium schools, local Universities and Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to be strengthened to promote the benefits of teaching as a profession and the routes available into teaching to school learners who are considering their future career pathways.

- High numbers of practitioners leaving the profession:
 - Effective wellbeing support is put in place for those who are experiencing challenges.
 - It is important that exit interviews are undertaken to understand the reasons for leaving our employment as a Local Authority.
 - iTrent reports enable us to gather intelligence and to routinely scrutinise data to identify any trends.

- Geographical location of RCT:

Implement a targeted recruitment campaign to promote teaching as a profession in RCT and the benefits of working in our community and for RCTCBC as an employer.

- Succession Planning:
 - Continued delivery of the Local Authority's highly successful Aspiring Leaders Programme and implementation of plans to deliver a Middle Leaders Programme.
 - Proactive steps to be taken to ensure good engagement levels with the wide range of leadership programmes available with CSC.
 - Ensure that the professional learning provided is targeted and effectively upskills the language abilities of the workforce.

Appendix 1A

SWAC data

The datasets in the tables below are derived from SWAC 2022.

The table below outlines the Welsh language ability of teachers against their age profile.

Table A.1

Teacher Age Profile by Welsh Language Ability								
Age	No skills	Entry	Foundation	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficient	No info	Total
Under 25	24	30	17	8	8	43	1	131
25-29	50	65	54	16	13	76	2	276
30-39	130	170	117	53	51	142	6	669
40-49	151	150	120	44	40	150	8	663
50-59	72	80	55	31	25	68	2	333
60 and over	6	6	1	-	1	2	1	17
Total	433	501	364	152	138	481	20	2,089

The table below outlines the Welsh language ability of practitioners by school phase across all schools in RCT.

Table A.2

Teacher Welsh proficiency by Phase (All Schools)							
Phase	No skills	Entry	Foundation	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficiency	No info
Middle school	90	50	16	11	9	124	5
PRU	6	19	3	0	1	0	0
Primary School	7	202	293	118	98	185	13
Special	12	45	15	6	3	5	0
Secondary	318	185	37	17	27	167	2
Total	433	501	364	152	138	481	20

The table below shows the Welsh language abilities of practitioners teaching Welsh as a subject only at primary level.

Table A.3

Teacher Teaching Welsh as a Subject Only (Primary)								
Medium Type	No skills	Entry	Foundation	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficiency	No info	Total
Dual	0	4	6	2	1	2	0	15
English Medium	0	155	243	104	35	48	13	598
Welsh Medium	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	159	245	106	36	49	13	608

The table below identifies the Welsh language ability of teachers in English medium schools by main subject.

Table A.4

Teachers Full-Person Equivalence (FPE) With Intermediate or Above Welsh Skills Teaching Years 7-14 In English Medium Schools by Main Subject				
	W4	W5	W6	
Subject Full Name	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficiency	Total
Total	15.2	20.6	44.7	80.5
Art	-	-	0.5	0.5
Biology	0.9	-	-	0.9
Business Studies	-	-	-	-
Chemistry	-	0.7	-	0.7
Drama/Theatre	-	-	-	-
Design & Technology	-	-	-	-
English	3.0	0.5	5.4	8.9
Engineering	-	-	-	-
Geography	1.0	-	0.8	1.8
History	1.0	1.0	-	2.0
ICT	0.5	0.8	-	1.3
Mathematics	3.0	1.0	3.0	7.0
Modern Foreign Language	0.5	-	1.3	1.8
Music	1.8	0.8	1.2	3.8
Physical Education	-	1.7	2.7	4.4
Physics	-	-	-	-
Personal & Social Education	-	-	-	-

Religious Education	1.7	2.4	2.1	6.2
Science	-	0.5	2.5	3.0
Social Sciences	-	-	-	-
Vocational Subject	-	-	-	-
Welsh Baccalaureate	1.0	-	0.9	1.9
Welsh	-	11.1	23.3	34.4
Other Humanities	0.8	-	-	0.8
Other Subject	-	-	1.0	1.0

The table below identifies the Welsh language ability of teachers in English medium schools by all subjects taught.

Table A.5

Teachers Full-Person Equivalence (FPE) With Intermediate or Above Welsh Skills Teaching Years 7-14 (Secondary Schools) In English Medium Schools by All Subjects Taught				
	W4	W5	W6	
Subject Full Name	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficiency	Total
Total	17.0	24.0	52.0	93.0
Art	-	-	1.0	1.0
Biology	0.9	0.2	0.1	1.1
Business Studies	-	-	0.1	0.1
Chemistry	-	0.8	0.5	1.2
Drama/Theatre	-	0.1	0.5	0.6
Design & Technology	-	0.1	0.2	0.3
English	3.0	0.5	5.5	9.0
Engineering	-	-	-	-
Geography	1.0	-	0.9	1.9
History	1.2	1.0	0.2	2.4
ICT	1.0	1.2	-	2.2
Mathematics	3.0	1.2	3.3	7.5
Modern Foreign Language	0.5	-	1.6	2.1
Music	1.8	1.0	1.4	4.2
Physical Education	-	1.9	3.2	5.0
Physics	-	0.0	-	0.0
Personal & Social Education	0.0	0.3	0.5	0.8
Religious Education	1.7	3.0	2.2	6.9
Science	0.1	1.1	2.9	4.1
Social Sciences	-	-	-	-
Vocational Subject	-	0.3	0.3	0.6
Welsh Baccalaureate	1.3	-	1.6	2.8

Welsh	0.5	11.5	25.1	37.1
Other Humanities	0.8	-	-	0.8
Other Subject	0.3	-	1.0	1.3

The table below contains data on the Welsh language ability of teachers teaching through the medium of Welsh across all schools in RCT, split by school phase.

Table A.6

Teaching Through Medium of Welsh in Current Post (All Schools)							
School Phase	No skills	Entry	Foundation	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficiency	No info
Middle	0	0	0	0	7	117	0
PRU	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Primary	0	0	4	3	49	114	0
Special	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Secondary	0	0	0	1	11	136	0
Grand Total	0	0	5	4	68	368	0

The table below illustrates the Welsh language ability of those teaching through the medium of Welsh by their main subject.

Table A.7

Teaching Through Medium of Welsh in Current Post by Subject (Main Subject)								
	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	
Subject Full Name	No skills	Entry	Foundation	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficiency	No info	Total
Total	-	-	-	1	16	224	-	241
Art	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	8
Biology	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Business Studies	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3
Chemistry	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	4
Drama/Theatre	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3
Design & Technology	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	10
English	-	-	-	-	-	19	-	19
Engineering	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Geography	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	7
History	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	7
ICT	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	8
Mathematics	-	-	-	-	1	25	-	26

Modern Foreign Language	-	-	-	1	1	7	-	9
Music	-	-	-	-	1	7	-	8
Physical Education	-	-	-	-	-	19	-	19
Physics	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Personal & Social Education	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3
Religious Education	-	-	-	-	2	4	-	6
Science	-	-	-	-	-	21	-	21
Social Sciences	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	7
Vocational Subject	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	6
Welsh Baccalaureate	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	6
Welsh	-	-	-	-	11	43	-	54
Other Humanities	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	4
Other Subject	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The table below identifies the Welsh language ability of those teaching through the medium of Welsh in all subjects taught.

Table A.8

Teaching Through Medium of Welsh in All Subjects Taught (Teaching Years and Above)								
	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	
Subject Full Name	No skills	Entry	Foundation	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficiency	No info	Total
Total	-	-	-	3	28	501	-	532
Art	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	11
Biology	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	10
Business Studies	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	7
Chemistry	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	8
Drama/Theatre	-	-	-	-	2	12	-	14
Design & Technology	-	-	-	-	-	24	-	24
English	-	-	-	-	-	24	-	24
Engineering	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Geography	-	-	-	-	2	9	-	11
History	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	15
ICT	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	14
Mathematics	-	-	-	-	1	32	-	33
Modern Foreign Language	-	-	-	1	2	11	-	14
Music	-	-	-	-	2	10	-	12
Physical Education	-	-	-	-	-	24	-	24
Physics	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	9
Personal & Social Education	-	-	-	1	1	35	-	37
Religious Education	-	-	-	-	3	8	-	11
Science	-	-	-	-	-	35	-	35
Social Sciences	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	12
Vocational Subject	-	-	-	-	-	27	-	27
Welsh Baccalaureate	-	-	-	-	-	47	-	47
Welsh	-	-	-	1	13	53	-	67
Other Humanities	-	-	-	-	1	26	-	27
Other Subject	-	-	-	-	1	38	-	39

The table below outlines the Welsh language ability of ALN Co-ordinators across all schools in RCT, split by school phase.

Table A.9

Number of Additional Learning Needs Co-Ordinators (ALNCo) By Welsh Language Ability									
	No. of Schools	No. of Schools with an ALNCo	No skills	Entry	Foundation	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficiency	No info
All schools	115	115	11	24	37	15	12	20	3
Welsh Medium schools	16	16	-	-	-	-	4	12	-

The table below outlines the Welsh language ability of ALN support staff across all schools in RCT, split by school phase.

Table A.10

Number of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Support Staff by Welsh Language Ability							
School Medium	No skills	Entry	Foundation	Intermediate	Higher	Proficiency	No info
Dual	2	1	0	0	0	1	0
English Medium	34	43	26	9	5	5	3
Welsh Medium	0	0	0	0	4	11	0
Total	36	44	26	9	9	17	3

The table below demonstrates the Welsh language ability of the Local Authority's school-based workforce for the academic year 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

Table A.11

Welsh Language Ability of Total Teachers (Including Headteachers, School Teachers and School Learning Support Workers) Employed by the Local Authority				
Skill Level	Academic Year 2020-2021		Academic Year 2021-2022	
	Number	%	Number	%
No Skills (NS)	450	21.2%	433	20.7
Entry Level (EL)	499	23.4%	501	24.0
Foundation Level (FL)	329	15.5%	364	17.4
Intermediate Level (IL)	167	7.9%	152	7.3
Advanced Level (AL)	137	6.4%	138	6.6
Proficient Level (PL)	523	24.6%	481	23.0
Information Not Obtained (INO)	21	1%	20	1.0
Total	2,126	100%	2,089	100%

The data in the table that follows outlines the total number of school-based workforce (including headteachers, school teachers and school learning support workers) employed by the Local Authority, teaching/working through the medium of Welsh for the academic year 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

Table A.12

Total Teachers Employed by the Local Authority Teaching/Working Through the Medium of Welsh				
Category	Academic Year 2020–2021		Academic Year 2021-2022	
	Number	%	Number	%
Teaching/Working Through the Medium of Welsh in Current Post	462	21.7%	445	21.3%
Able to Teach/Work Through the Medium of Welsh but not doing so in Current Post	144	6.8%	135	6.5%
Unable to Teach/Work Through the Medium of Welsh	859	40.4%	874	41.8%
Teaching Welsh as a Subject Only	661	31.1%	635	30.4%
Total	2,126	100%	2,089	100%



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WESP annual review report feedback

Outcomes	Feedback	Action for LA
<p>Outcome 1</p>	<p>The increase in Welsh-medium Flying Start providers (from 14 – 21) during 2022-23 is positive and has enabled you to increase the number of Welsh-medium places as part of your phase 2 expansion. Hopefully your efforts in reviewing your information for parents/carers, collaboration with Mudiad Meithrin and others will lead to those places, and Cylchoedd Meithrin places more broadly, being filled.</p> <p>Whilst there are fewer children accessing Welsh-medium nursery that you projected, there are fewer children across both sectors overall. Nevertheless, it's clear that you recognise this as one of your key priority areas during this initial period of WESP delivery and it's encouraging to see how many of the actions set out in your 5-year action plan you've implemented and/or progressing.</p> <p>We are currently working with our childcare and capital funding colleagues with regard to your Cylch Meithin Beddau proposal. You will receive an update very shortly.</p> <p>We've received confirmation that we'll be able to share annual Mudiad Meithrin data for 2022/23 with you by the end of the week.</p>	<p>Discussion with WG.</p>
<p>Outcome 2</p>	<p>As with Outcome 1 data, the number of 5-year old learners accessing Welsh-medium education during 2022-23 is less that projected. We recognise the</p>	

	<p>potential impact the fall in birthrates may have and will be monitoring the situation to identify future trends.</p> <p>We're pleased to hear your Ysgol Llwyn y Forwyn and Ysgol Awel Taf developments are progressing well.</p> <p>It's reassuring to hear time has been invested in reviewing the information available to parents/carers on your website. We know that this has been achieved by working closely with your sub-group stakeholders and is an excellent example of partnership working.</p> <p>We're pleased you've been able to appoint your late immersion lead during 2022-23 and are already supporting learners transferring to Welsh-medium schools. Do you see there is an opportunity to attract learners from the English-medium stream of Ysgol Heol y Celyn with the establishment of Ysgol Awel Taf?</p>	Discussion with WG.
Outcome 3	<p>Your transition rates have always been consistently strong, particularly between foundation phase to reception and year 6 to year 7. With regard to key stage 4 to 5 transition, which is much lower, it's good to have the comparative data with the English-medium sector to give perspective. The increase in secondary school surplus places (from 21% in 2020-21 to 27% in 2022-23) will need monitoring.</p> <p>We'd be interested to hear over the coming year what impact the changes implemented this year with regard to in-year transfers is/may be having on reducing the number of learners leaving the Welsh-medium sector.</p>	Discussion with WG.
Outcome 4	<p>Progress made between CSCJES, Gyda'n Gilydd Partnership and the WJEC in developing vocational courses sounds very positive. The lack of available Welsh language vocational courses has been raised by your Welsh-medium Secondary Heads over several years and is obviously impacting learner decisions with regard to their post-16 education.</p>	Discussion with WG.

	Is the work undertaken by Coleg y Cymoedd to develop its bilingual offer welcomed by Welsh-medium schools or are there tensions?	
Outcome 5	<p>It's great to hear that your Welsh-medium and English-medium schools continue to engage in the Siarter Iaith and Cymraeg Campus Programme. Its particularly encouraging to hear that your special schools and units will also soon be included.</p> <p>Evidence provided of progress made against the actions in your action plan and good evidence of an effective partnership with the Urdd and Menter Iaith in preparation to the Eisteddfod coming to the area in 2024.</p>	Discussion with WG.
Outcome 6	<p>Whereas just under half of local authorities across Wales continue to review their provision for learners with additional needs, its pleasing to hear that you've concluded your review and can now proceed to act on its findings. Evidence provided is comprehensive.</p> <p>The lack of specialist staff to support the early years sector has been highlighted in other areas too and the ALN team have been updated. A task and finish group focusing on ALN, and the Welsh language was established by the Welsh Government before the end of the Summer term and a representative from Mudiad Meithrin is a member. Research is being commissioned to identify, review, and bring consistency to the data available on Welsh-language ALN provision. This will commence in January, and we'll keep you updated of its progress.</p>	Discussion with WG.
Outcome 7	<p>Evidence is provided of the extensive work carried out during 2022-23 to collate and test a number of workforce datasets including SWAC, PLASC and internal data collections.</p> <p>There are no quick wins as we know, however, the in-depth analysis undertaken by yourselves during this past reporting year has provided valuable insights into</p>	Discussion with WG.

	<p>teacher recruitment, retention, and promotional trends. With your permission, we'd like to use your approach to Outcome 7 as an example of good practice to present to the External Workforce Board, established last year to implement the Welsh Government's 10-year workforce plan.</p> <p>Revised SWAC guidelines were introduced during the summer term to encourage better use of the census by schools and local authorities as a tool for planning and analysing local education workforce needs. The SWAC reporting period will open soon and we are keen to hear about your experience of using it and where it needs to be further strengthened.</p>	
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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 26TH FEBRUARY 2024

MANAGEMENT OF TIP SAFETY IN RCTCBC

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR HIGHWAYS, STREETCARE AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Author: J.Mynott, Head of Infrastructure Asset Management

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on the work that the Tip Safety Team have undertaken in the last year with respect to the management, monitoring and oversight of disused coal tips within the County Borough.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To scrutinise the work of the RCTCBC Tip Safety Team and the approach of prioritisation of resources.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To be aware of the work undertaken by the Tip Safety team
- 3.2 To consider the different approaches for Tip Safety with RCTCBC under the Mines and Quarries (Tips) Act 1969, as landowner and with ongoing risk management and prioritisation of resources.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Approval to establish a Tip Safety Team was given by Cabinet on 27th January 2022 – Report [Tip Safety Management Resources](#). The team was established to manage risks of tip instability within RCT by:
- Managing the Council's responsibilities under the Mines and Quarries (Tips) Act 1969,
 - Managing the Council's safety responsibilities as a land-owner of significant numbers of coal spoil tips across RCT.

- 4.2 There has been successful appointment to 4 of the 6 established posts with the remaining two posts currently covered by a secondment from a third party consultant and agency engineer.
Finding suitable candidates for the vacant posts is proving difficult due to the specialised nature of the work and third-party consultants offering higher salaries.
- 4.3 Whilst the proposals to change the legislative framework are underway by the Welsh Government (RCT response to WG White Paper debated by Overview and Scrutiny Committee July 20th 2022 [Coal Tip Safety \(Wales\) White Paper](#)) this report outlines the ongoing work being undertaken to manage and monitor tips until such time these proposals are enacted.
- 4.4 RCT have successfully applied for grant funding from Welsh Government for Coal Tip Safety work and this grant funding covers the costs for the work outlined in this report.
- 4.5 **DATA** - The establishment of the WG Tips Task Force and the desire to streamline and regulate all tips data across Wales, has required a series of lengthy exercises to align data held by individual Local Authorities and other public bodies. In general, this data includes information as ownership, boundary and category. This has been an iterative process which is still being undertaken and can result in anomalies (such as differences in category – due to non-standardised methods of assessment by different bodies). RCT have been heavily involved in this process and continues to be so. The WG recently published (on DataMap Wales - [Category C and D Disused Coal Tips in Wales | DataMapWales \(gov.wales\)](#)) the locations of all the C and D category tips. Members of the RCT Tips Team together with representatives of WG attended a public meeting on November 30th 2023 at the launch of this information (in Llys Cadwyn, Pontypridd) – however there was limited public attendance. WG also held online sessions members of the public could register to attend. The Tips Team continue to resolve data anomalies and are in the process of aligning RCT held data with that of the WG and Tips Task Force. Each tip has a unique reference number, in RCT a number is prefixed by CV (Cynon Valley), RH (Rhondda) or TE (Taff Ely) depending on location. WG have established unique number references for all tips across Wales.
- 4.6 **INSPECTIONS** - In 2021, a Risk matrix was established by the RCT Tip Safety team to standardize the Categorisation of Tips and the resultant category informs the subsequent inspection interval for the tip. The category definitions and inspection intervals remain as per the RCT Policy and Procedure for Management of Disused Colliery and Quarry Spoil Tips 2012 – the intervals are as follows:

- D1 - monthly,
- D3 - 3 monthly,
- C - 6 monthly,
- B - annually,
- A2- 2 yearly,
- A4- 4 yearly.

Inspections are scheduled, undertaken, written up and submitted for approval by the overseeing Tip Safety Officer. Most inspections are undertaken by the Tip Safety team with some specific higher category tips undertaken by the Council's Joint Venture Consultants, Redstart. Any concerns or defects noted on the inspections are then transferred to a Tips defect sheet. Defects are categorized using a RAG system:

Black - Emergency action – Immediate notification

Red - Short term maintenance / remediation required - to be actioned as soon as reasonably practicable

Amber – Medium term maintenance / remediation required but with risk mitigation such as site visits, monitoring etc

Green – Long term maintenance / remediation required - Currently low risk.

These defects are then further prioritized based on the tip category. Higher priority is given to issues such as drainage defects or notable structural issues which may worsen or have an impact on tip stability.

- 4.7 On average 80-90 tips inspections are undertaken each quarter. Between April to December 2023, 256 planned tip inspections have been completed, this figure does include some quarry tips.
- 4.8 In addition to the planned inspections, ad hoc severe weather inspections are undertaken after sustained periods of heavy rainfall or exceptional rainfall events. An inspection undertaken in January 2024 on a privately owned tip CV040 which is a kilometre north east of Abernant, resulted in notice being served under Section 14 of the Mines and Quarries (Tips) Act 1969 on a commercial owner of a tip to rectify scour damage from a pond. The risk was to a public right of way below the pond. The work to mitigate the immediate risk has recently been undertaken.
- 4.9 **MAINTENANCE** - With Coal Tip Safety Grant funding the Council has been able to put in place a programme of work on tips including maintenance – minor and major maintenance, studies and investigations. Please see the list in Appendix 1 outlining the references of the tips and description of works covered for the Coal Tip Safety grant application for 2023/24.

- 4.10 For minor maintenance works, this is identified from the inspection reports and in 2023/24 where we have worked with Highways Streetcare to undertake the works. Once completed, the maintenance works are inspected on site and signed off by a member of the Tip Safety team. Due to the size and nature of many of the tips and the amount of ageing drainage infrastructure present on many, it is impossible and impractical to undertake all maintenance work immediately. As a result, there is a prioritised system in place to address the work that if left unmitigated could contribute towards increased risks.
- 4.11 Typical maintenance can comprise of vegetation clearance, clearing out and repairing drainage channels, repairing pipes and culverts, reinstating drains, scour infill and repair.
- 4.12 In addition to the minor maintenance work, there has been ongoing specific repairs of a larger nature undertaken or planned to the various tips concerned. This work typically requires more surveys, detailed design and consents such as Ordinary Watercourse Consent. Examples of work are at RH03 Wattstown National Tip, where the mid access track has been restored to ensure access in all weathers and also permanent overflow drainage has been replaced. Future works required on the tip are to restore the mid berm drainage and prevent run off from permeating into the body of the tip. Ecological surveys will be renewed in February 2024 and subject to funding the work will be undertaken in Summer 2024.
- 4.13 Design and clearance work is currently ongoing as part of the preparations for remediation of the unregistered privately owned RH77 Graig Ddu Dinas tip. The toe of the tip is showing signs of movement and causing disruption to Graig Ddu Road and a localised slip onto Vicarage Road in Penygraig. Since 2020, the Council have commissioned site investigation and analysis of the tip. There is a monitoring system installed that provides data on rainfall, waterflows, ground water levels and ground movement. During Winter 2022/23 the movement was increasing such that temporary overland drainage was installed and to date it is mitigating the risk of further movement during heavy rainfall. The Council have been undertaking clearance work in recent weeks and the appointed consultants are meeting with the regulatory consenting teams to consider the major constraints to permanently improving drainage on the site within the current consenting framework. RCT will apply for grant funding for the work to remediate the “active” part of this tip and subject to a successful bid, works could commence in 2025.
- 4.14 Restoration of the scoured toe of tip CV128 at Penrhiwceiber if the proposed funding strategy is agreed within the current grant

application. The work would armour the toe of the tip along its embankment with the River Cynon.

- 4.15 Major work at the site of the Tylorstown landslip is progressing. Since the landslip from Upper Llanwonno Tip in February 2020 (Storm Dennis), the Council has implemented a four-phase remediation plan for the site. Phase One included emergency clearance work in the weeks that followed, Phases Two and Three which was removal of the slipped material from the valley floor and reinstatement of the river channel were substantially completed in June 2021, followed by additional work in autumn 2021 to stabilise the slope. Permanent works to the Phase 2 and 3 Receptor Sites A1, A2 and B will be progressed this year, planning consent has been obtained for the work to Sites A2 (planning reference 22/1477/08) and B (planning reference 22/1476/08).

Phase 4, the major phase of the remediation gained planning approval (planning reference 22/0600/08) in October 2022 and works commenced on site in April 2023. Up to 150,000 cubic metres of spoil material remaining on the hillside has now been relocated to the new adjacent receptor site. Progress to install significant drainage infrastructure has also continued – with more than 1,500-metres of surface water drainage pipe network installed to date. The wet weather in recent months has been challenging in terms of completing the work – but it has provided an opportunity to observe the changes to water movement and springs, as they develop to the hillside’s new profile.

As part of the Phase 4 works the Council is working to progress the longer-term land management plan for the hillside, including ways to prevent access by off-road vehicles and to create opportunities for biodiversity in the mosaic of habitats that will have been created.

- 4.16 **STUDIES** - The outcome of the WG’s proposed legislative change will formalise how tips are to be managed in the longer term and where responsibility will lie for tips under different ownership. In the interim, the Tip Safety team are proactively taking forward studies and information gathering on tips on a prioritised basis to inform decisions on these tips in the future and to consider options to maintain, monitor or remediate. An example of a recent desk study has been on the privately owned tip RH72 Ynyshir. The outcome has been to review the boreholes on the tip and with permission of the owner, RCT officers are monitoring ground water levels so these can be reviewed against historical data and stability analysis.
- 4.17 **MONITORING** - Examples of monitoring of tips in the longer term is the current system in operation on TE003 Lower Cilfynydd Tip since major works were completed there to drain the strata below the tip. There are boreholes at several locations on the tip and ground water levels are

monitored periodically. The data will be reviewed next in spring 2024. There are several systems in place on RH03 Wattstown National Tip, including tiltmeters, flow meters and a camera at a critical culvert inlet. Currently, Joint Venture consultant Redstart reviews and provides quarterly monitoring reports on RH03 data and interim updates as required due to specific results.

- 4.18 Challenges continue with the management of tips to ensure the ongoing safety within RCTCBC. Many major tip reclamation and remediation schemes were undertaken on tips from the 1970's onwards. Designed and installed infrastructure is now reaching the end of its design and material life which is presenting a new set of challenges to the structural integrity of the tips. Although the drainage infrastructure on tips is still currently functioning, it may not have sufficient capacity to comply with current drainage standards and the effects of climate change.
- 4.19 Establishing the Tip Safety Team has focussed monitoring, maintenance and management of tips within one team and established processes for tips dependant on the ownership and liability. This enables a risk prioritisation approach for resources, funding and programme.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 There are no equality and diversity implications.

6 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no Welsh Language implications.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 The cost of the Tip Safety Team is currently covered by Welsh Government Coal Tip Safety Funding.

Since 2020 the Council have claimed and expended the following on Tip Safety:

- 2020/21 £3,571,864
- 2021/22 £2,945,491
- 2022/23 - £2,284,502.

- 7.2 In 2023/24 the Council was successful in obtaining £11,554,375 of Coal Tip Safety grant funding with the claim window until March 2025. A claim has been submitted for £6,091,721,27 to date with £4,874,343 of that cost attributed to Tylorstown landslip remediation. The Council will submit an additional application for funding for 2024/25 when the funding application window opens.
- 7.3 The Tip inspection regime currently costs approximately £250,000 per financial year.
- 7.4 Minor maintenance spend is currently in the region of £0.75million per year over all the tips.
- 7.5 Major maintenance can be in the region of £100k - £1million+ per tip, dependant upon the requirement of the remediation works.
- 7.6 Remediation schemes are multi million pound projects. The overall cost of Tylorstown Landslip remediation is currently forecasted to be just under £15million, this cost is reduced as the colliery spoil material is contained within the overall site / location. These costs would rise significantly if the material had to leave the site and would have a significant impact on the carbon footprint whilst also involving significant lorry movements along the Council's highway network.
- 7.7 Grant funding for RH077 will require discussion with WG as tender award and major spend will be over two consecutive financial years.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Mines and Quarries (Tips) Act 1969

9 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 9.1 There is no consultation with respect to this paper. Consultation may be required on each respective tip should there be major works requiring planning approval.

10 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 10.1 A Resilient Wales - Management and maintenance of tips helps to reduce any risk posed by them to infrastructure, biodiversity and the public. The tips will provide a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems with the ability to deal with climate change.
- 10.2 A Wales of Cohesive Communities - Monitoring and inspection of tips allows those societies living in close proximity to tips to have

confidence and peace of mind that risks are being managed which will benefit the communities' well-being, making the area safe, viable and attractive.

- 10.3 A Globally Responsible Wales - Management and monitoring will also benefit biodiversity and demonstrate our global responsibility.
- 10.4 The works are in accord with the Council's Corporate Plan – Making A Difference – by creating Places where people are proud to live, work and play.
- 10.5 This also meets some of the objectives of the Cwm Taf Well-Being Plan 2018-2023 namely objective 1 Thriving Communities.

11 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The Tip Safety Team are progressing the work of maintaining, monitoring and managing tips and tip safety within RCTCBC.
- 11.2 Processes have been developed from inspections to defect recording and prioritising maintenance.
- 11.3 Continuing focus on recruitment to fill the vacant posts within the team is needed.
- 11.4 The work relies on Coal Tip Safety grant funding. This also pays for a significant amount of minor and major maintenance on tips.
- 11.5 Tylorstown Landslip Remediation continues and other major projects are being developed such as remediation of scour to the toe of CV128 Penrhiwceiber and stabilisation work at RH77 Graig Ddu, Dinas.
- 11.6 The work, resource and funding is undertaken on a prioritised basis according to risk. Moving forward, desk studies, site investigations and monitoring will feed into the longer term management of tips.
- 11.7 The future legislative framework will change the responsibilities for Tip Safety and the team will develop accordingly.

Appendix 1 – Coal Tip Safety Grant Application Work 2023/24

Site or Tip Name/Location	Tip Ref	Category (A,B,C,D)	Ownership (public / private / multiple)	Description of works to be carried out
Upper Llanwonno Tip	RH01	D	RCTCBC	Tylorstown Landslip Remediation Phase 4 - works on site. Installation of monitoring cameras and longer term management. Phase 2 and 3 Permanent Use for Receptor sites – Design, planning and Works
Wattstown National Tip	RH03	D	RCTCBC	Drainage reparation – design, consents and installation. Three sites in order of priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compound overflow drainage permanent repairs • Mid berm drainage • Cascade reconstruction
Hendre Gwilym	RH42	C	Private	Drone survey review Vegetation clearance Liaison with Coal Authority regarding adit
Ynyshir	RH72	C	Private Landowner permission required	Borehole condition review General maintenance Ground investigation and /or reinstallation of borehole monitoring if historic boreholes not accessible Stability Risk Assessment
Graig Ddu Dinas Tip	RH77	D	Private (unknown ownership)	Data gathering and monitoring, Design, Fees, Consents, for overall solution to improve stability with aim to be on site for 2025 subject to funding with some site preparation works in advance of main scheme
North of Gilfach	RH93	B	RCTCBC	Survey, desk study, drainage and geomorphology review
Abergorki	RH105	D	Private	Overview, inspection of culvert, inlet and erosion review, drainage and geomorphology assessment; initial design

Site or Tip Name/Location	Tip Ref	Category (A,B,C,D)	Ownership (public / private / multiple)	Description of works to be carried out
Cwmbach	CV63	D	RCTCBC and Private	Finish ground investigation reporting and produce ground model, slope stability assessment Clear fallen trees from watercourse to mitigate erosion risk Land purchase
Y Ffrwdd	CV101	D3	Private	Desk study and information review
Penrhiwceiber	CV128	A4	RCTCBC	Design and advanced vegetation clearance for 2024/25 works (subject to funding) Toe of tip scoured by River Cynon
Cefn Pennar	CV129	D	RCTCBC	Inspections, Surveys, Assessment of risks, Ecology Vegetation clearance Review of culvert inlet grille and access – design mitigation measures and install camera
Albion Tip (Lower)	TE03	D	RCTCBC	Maintenance of drainage installed in 2015 Improved drainage where ponding is noted Repair wall at toe of tip
Albion Tip (Upper)	TE04	B	RCTCBC	Maintenance and restoration of drainage
Cwm Colliery	TE64	D3	RCTCBC/ Private	Desk study and review of available information Culvert inspections Ecology assessments and review of drainage systems
Mynydd yr Eglwys	RH18/RH37/RH36	C/B	RCTCBC/ Private	Review of landslide at Mynydd yr Eglwys in context of risks to three tips in the immediate area

Site or Tip Name/Location	Tip Ref	Category (A,B,C,D)	Ownership (public / private / multiple)	Description of works to be carried out																														
Tips Maintenance and Investigation; Desk Studies; LIDAR surveys		B/C/D		<p>Higher priority maintenance and investigation including vegetation clearance for possible future works.</p> <p>Investigations include for desk studies of available, Drainage investigations and culvert inspection and LIDAR surveys.</p> <p>Maintenance includes drainage repairs, desilting, de vegetation, clearing culverts, maintaining access routes, erosion repairs and control.</p> <p>List of Tips Includes:</p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>RH113 / TE47</td> <td>RCT owned</td> </tr> <tr> <td>RH04 / RH05</td> <td>RCT owned</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CV122</td> <td>RCT owned</td> </tr> <tr> <td>RH36</td> <td>RCT owned</td> </tr> <tr> <td>RH43</td> <td>RCT owned</td> </tr> <tr> <td>RH58</td> <td>RCT/ NRW owned</td> </tr> <tr> <td>RH81 & 82</td> <td>RCT owned</td> </tr> <tr> <td>RH89</td> <td>RCT owned</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CV52</td> <td>RCT owned</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CV80/CV33</td> <td>RCT owned</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CV125</td> <td>RCT owned</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CV130 & CV127 & CV102</td> <td>RCT owned</td> </tr> <tr> <td>RH18</td> <td>RCT owned</td> </tr> <tr> <td>RH90</td> <td>RCT owned</td> </tr> <tr> <td>RH39</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	RH113 / TE47	RCT owned	RH04 / RH05	RCT owned	CV122	RCT owned	RH36	RCT owned	RH43	RCT owned	RH58	RCT/ NRW owned	RH81 & 82	RCT owned	RH89	RCT owned	CV52	RCT owned	CV80/CV33	RCT owned	CV125	RCT owned	CV130 & CV127 & CV102	RCT owned	RH18	RCT owned	RH90	RCT owned	RH39	
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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 FEBRUARY 2024

DRAFT ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2022 - 23

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To pre-scrutinise the Council's Draft Annual Equality Report attached at Appendix B, for the year 2022-23

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that: -

- 2.1 Members undertake pre scrutiny on the report (attached at Appendix B), thus providing Scrutiny with an opportunity to contribute to this matter; and
- 2.2 Authorise the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications to provide feedback to Cabinet on behalf of Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The need for Cabinet to be aware of the comments and observations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee prior to their consideration of the Council's Annual Equality Report, for the year 2022-23

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 4.1 The Annual Equality Report has been developed to fulfil the Council's legal duties and obligations to report on its progress in delivering the General and Specific Equality Duties.

- 4.2 The report contains progress made in year 2022-23 in meeting the equality objectives contained in Council's Strategic Equality Plan
- 4.3 Members of the Overview & Scrutiny are being provided with the opportunity to undertake pre scrutiny on the Annual Equality Report in advance of Cabinet's consideration and whether it agrees the publication of the Annual Equality Report 2022-23. Members will recall the identification of equality and diversity for greater scrutiny as part of scrutiny improvements identified in 2020.
- 4.4 In particular, Members may wish to consider whether the report has captured the relevant information required to fulfil the Council's legal duties and obligations to report on how it has met the General Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010.

5. PRE SCRUTINY

- 5.1 Members are reminded that the purpose of pre scrutiny activity is to influence the decisions before they are made. The Council's Overview & Scrutiny continues to have the opportunity to explore and comment on a number of reports in advance of Cabinet's consideration to bring a different perspective to the decisions made and enabling Cabinet decisions to be more informed.
- 5.2 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee has a further opportunity to undertake pre scrutiny of the Annual Equality Report for the 2022-23 Municipal Year in advance of Cabinet approval

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Equality and diversity implications will be considered as part of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's feedback and comments and any subsequent implementation arrangements.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 The involvement of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in the pre-scrutiny exercise will contribute to the quality and robustness of Cabinet decision-making

8. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Financial and resource implications will be considered as part of any feedback and subsequent implementation arrangements.

9. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 9.1 Equality considerations feature throughout Corporate and National priorities and specifically the contents of the attached report contributes to a More Equal Wales and a Wales of Cohesive Communities.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The undertaking of pre scrutiny by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in respect of the Council's Annual Equality Report, for the year 2022-23 strengthens accountability and assists Cabinet to assess whether progress made in year 2022-23 meets the equality objectives contained in Council's Strategic Equality Plan.
- 10.2 Any comments and feedback to the Cabinet will ensure that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee fully evaluates the effectiveness of its overview and scrutiny function.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

as amended by

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS:

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DRAFT ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT

26 FEBRUARY 2024

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES &
COMMUNICATIONS**

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

MARCH 2024

DRAFT ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2022-2023

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES WITH RELEVANT
PORTFOLIO HOLDER CLLR MAUREEN WEBBER, DEPUTY LEADER**

Author(s): Melanie Warburton, Diversity and Inclusion Manager

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides information on the Council's Draft Annual Equality Report for the year 2022-2023.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

The Annual Equality Report is agreed and published.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Annual Equality Report has been developed to fulfil the Council's legal duties and obligations to report on its progress in delivering the General and Specific Equality Duties.

3.2 The report contains progress made in year 2022-2023 in meeting the Equality Objectives contained in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The Public Sector Equality Duties in Wales which came in to force on 6th April 2011 included a requirement for public authorities (including Local Authorities and Schools) to report annually on how it has met the General Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010.

4.2 Reporting requirements are set out in the following regulations;

- Regulation 7 Collection and publication of information
- Regulation 9 Employment monitoring reporting

- Regulation 16 Reporting on compliance with the General duty.

4.3 The Council must report the above information on an annual basis, and publish by 31 March each year.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

5.1 The Council must satisfy its public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties Councils must in making decisions, have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations based on protected characteristics.

5.2 An equality impact assessment is not required for this report.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been prepared and is attached in Appendix B (to follow). This will be published on the Council's website together with a consultation document that outlines the proposal in further detail and in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

6.2 A Welsh language impact assessment is not required for this report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

The Annual Equality Report has been developed to meet the requirements in the The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, known as the Wales Specific Equality Duties.

9. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN ,NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

10.1 The contents of the plan contribute to the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan.

10.2 Due regard has been made to all 7 well-being goals and the 5 ways of working, as contained within the [Wellbeing of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), which requires the Council to think about the long term impact of decisions, on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

10. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

10.1 This applies to all electoral wards.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 The Council's Annual Equality Report has been developed in line with legislative requirements and guidance produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

11.2 The report highlights the positive work that the Council has undertaken to meet its equality objectives contained in the SEP.

11.3 The Annual Equality Report has to be published by 31 March 2024 in order to comply with legal requirements.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee-
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer:
Melanie Warburton, Diversity and Inclusion Manager

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

A DISCUSSION PAPER FOR CABINET

MARCH 2024

Item: DRAFT ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2022-2023

Background Papers

None

Officer to contact:

Melanie Warburton, Diversity and Inclusion Manager

DRAFT



Rhondda Cynon Taf Council

Annual Equality Report

1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

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1. Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Council's Annual Equality Monitoring Report, which represents the Council's approach to providing information on its work in respect of equality and diversity.

The Council is required, under the Wales Specific Equality Duties, to report annually on how it has met the General Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010, and this document contains the information required in order for the Council to meet these duties.

Publishing the information in one report covering all requirements will make it easier for interested parties to identify how the Council is delivering on its commitment to equality, its legal obligations and the action plans contained within its Strategic Equality Plan (SEP).

Each section of the report looks at the Council's progress and the final section contains details of future work the Council needs to do.

Once again Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council has continued to make our County Borough a more equal place for people to live, work and access services, however we recognise that there are, and will continue to be, areas for improvement. Publishing this Annual Report will not only help the Council to meet its obligations under the Wales Specific Equality Duties, but will assist you, as citizens to identify these areas and monitor progress on them.

Councillor Maureen Webber
Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Council Business

2. Who We Are

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council covers a wide geographical area and has a population of over 237,700 (Office of National Statistics (ONS) – Census 2021). The Council is the largest employer in the local area and the third largest local authority in Wales, over 79% of employees live within the Council boundaries.

The Council is committed to the principles of equality and diversity and we work to ensure that this is demonstrated in our service delivery and in our employment practices.

The Council reviewed its Corporate Plan in 2020. The Council's priorities set out in the [Corporate Plan 2020-2024](#) are:

- Ensuring **People**: are independent, healthy and successful;
- Creating **Places**: where people are proud to live, work and play;
- Enabling **Prosperity**: creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.

The Plan puts residents at the centre of what we do.

A new Corporate Plan is being developed for 2024-2030 and will be launched in April 2024. This plan builds on the strong foundations of our previous plans and at the same time recognises the changes we need to make to meet the unprecedented service and financial challenges ahead.

The Council is governed by 75 elected Members and operates a Cabinet system. It has a Senior Leadership Team headed by the Chief Executive and attended by Senior Directors, and employs over 10,000 employees in a variety of service areas and roles based within the following groups:

- Chief Executives
- Community & Children's Services
- Education & Inclusion Services
- Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services.

3. Reporting on Equality

The main purpose of this Annual Report is to fulfil the Council's legal duties and obligations to report on its progress in delivering the General and Specific Equality Duties.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that all public authorities covered under the specific duties in Wales should produce an Annual Equality Report by 31 March each year. This report covers the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

What the regulations require:

The Annual Report for 2022-2023 must set out:

- The steps the authority has taken to identify and collect relevant information;
- How the authority has used this information in meeting the three aims of the general duty;
- Any reasons for not collecting relevant information;
- A statement on the effectiveness of the authority's arrangements for identifying and collecting relevant information;
- Specified employment information, including information on training and pay;
- Progress towards fulfilling each of the authority's equality objectives;
- A statement on the effectiveness of the steps that the authority has taken to fulfil each of its equality objectives.

4. The General Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a general duty on the Council (and other public sector organisations) when making decisions and delivering services to have due regard in how to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (protected characteristics are explained below);
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Protected Characteristics

This is the term used in the Equality Act to identify the types of people who are more likely to experience detrimental treatment and/or discrimination simply because of who they are. The law is designed to protect them, they are:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender Reassignment;
- Marriage and Civil Partnership;
- Pregnancy and Maternity;
- Race;
- Religion or Belief;
- Sex;
- Sexual Orientation.

When thinking about how to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not, the Council also has to think about the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and are connected to that characteristic;
- Meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The Council also has to particularly think about how it will tackle prejudice and promote understanding. This report includes information on what the Council has done in order to meet the General Duty.

5. How We Meet The General Equality Duty

To demonstrate how the Council has met the General and Specific Duties relevant information is considered, which may include data from local and/or internal sources such as customer surveys, community forums or Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), as well as data from national and/or external sources such as census information, research reports and statistics on hate crime.

IDENTIFICATION AND COLLECTION OF RELEVANT INFORMATION

When considering how to identify what information should be included in this report, the Council first looked at the information relating to it's SEP. This allowed the

Council to reflect and monitor whether the information is still appropriate in assisting the Council to deliver on the General and Specific Duties.

Full details can be found in the SEP which can be accessed on the Council website at: [Strategic Equality Plan](#)

The information identified is still very relevant to the delivery of the General and Specific Duties; internal documents provide statistical information that can be used for determining action and enable comparison to identify improvements or areas for further improvement. Internal strategies and their action plans provide information on how the Council is delivering its priorities. External information, including that with a national context, provides the Council with a raft of data that can assist in developing appropriate and relevant policies and approaches.

The Council recognises that the SEP is not the only area that can identify relevant information and that whilst it is very useful, service areas would also hold information that could assist the Council in identifying how it is meeting the General and Specific Duties.

Many of our service areas have examples of good practice which help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED). The information is obtained through our internal performance management systems. As part of this performance management process, the Chief Executive reviews how individual service areas are demonstrating their compliance and commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duties. Whilst there are some excellent examples of good practice, some of which are highlighted later in this report in the section 'equality objectives', some areas have more to do. Work will continue to raise awareness and understanding of the PSED with the aim of fully embedding equality matters into all aspects of our service delivery.

In addition to the good practice in our service delivery and workplace, ensuring Diversity in Democracy is commitment from our elected Members, and the Council is working to support their [Diversity Pledge](#).

The Council has an EIA process in place, the results of which contribute to the information contained within this report.

Employment monitoring data is provided from the Council's HR system. The previous system 'Vision' has been replaced by 'iTrent' during this reporting period. There have been some challenges in collecting equality monitoring information due to issues with the transfer of data between the systems. It should be noted that employment monitoring information includes teachers and all school-based employees.

THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE

The Council's main strategic plan is the [Corporate Plan](#). This Plan was implemented in March 2020 and sets out the Council's priorities for the 4 years between 2020-2024. The detailed actions to deliver these priorities are monitored and scrutinised by Councillors every quarter as part of the [Council's Performance Reports](#) to Cabinet. At the end of the year, the plans are also subject to more in depth challenge, review and evaluation, the results of which are then included in the Council's annual [Corporate Performance Report](#).

NON COLLECTION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF INFORMATION

Whilst considerable relevant information has been collected for this report, it is acknowledged that it is sometimes difficult to collect and monitor all information in a Council as large as Rhondda Cynon Taf. A number of cross-Council networks already exist, such as the Disability Officers Group, to ensure that information and good practice are monitored and shared, however it is recognised that improvements can always be made to encourage a consistent approach in information sharing.

Use of Information

When considering what information should be used it was important that areas of good practice were identified across service areas to demonstrate that a commitment to delivering equality exists throughout the Council. Information used in this report includes:

- The Council's Corporate Plan (2020-2024)
- Service delivery/projects (2022-2023)
- Employment practices
- Consultation and engagement programme
- EIAs (2023)
- Employment monitoring information (2022-2023)
- Monitoring and delivery of the SEP action plan (2022-2023).

DELIVERY OF COUNCIL STRATEGIES

The Council consults and engages with its residents to collect information that is used to plan and prioritise, identify areas for improvement and service change, set and monitor performance standards and measure satisfaction on the quality of the services we provide.

The Council continues to develop and increase engagement through our Let's Talk RCT engagement website [Let's Talk RCTCBC](#). The site has a suite of engagement tools that has enhanced our offer and made our engagements more user friendly

During 2023 just under 12,500 visits were made to Let's Talk RCT pages, with a further 800 made to Dewch i Siarad pages. This led to over 2,600 points of active engagement across multiple projects, the most active of which included Let's Talk Eisteddfod 2024, our annual budget consultation, Let's Talk Waste & Recycling and Let's Talk Local Development Plan.

Examples of the Let's Talk projects we have supported and led on include;

Let's Talk Equalities

Let's Talk Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP)

Let's Talk Budget 2024-2025 (Phase 1)

Continuing to Talk About What Matters to You

Let's Talk Eisteddfod 2024

Let's Talk Aberdare

Let's Talk About What Matters to You

Let's Talk Southern Gateway

Let's Talk Children's and Young Adult Library Service

Let's Talk Leader's Debate

Let's Talk Taff Trail Trallwn

Let's Talk Budget 2023-2024 (Phase 2)

Let's Talk Climate Change.

During 2023, we supported or managed a large number of services with their consultation and engagement activities and supported a number of face-to-face engagement events.

It is difficult to measure exact levels of feedback from all consultations, due to the different methods used, reporting timescales and the fact that some services are still undertaking consultations themselves. We have though attempted to provide some response levels in the table below.

During 2023 we have supported over 65 service consultations as shown in the table below, with over 10,000 responses received and analysed.

This is in addition to the over 2,500 engaged people via the Let's Talk site.

Note: these figures do not include those we engaged with via our face-to-face methods.

Service Area	Number of Consultations	Snap Surveys	Number of Responses
Chief Executive	16	9	2975
Community and Children's Services	28	28	1455
Education and Inclusion Services	6	6	3183
Frontline Services	5	6	2092
Public Health Protection & Community Services	12	12	504
TOTAL	67	61	10209

Note: higher than normal due to Waste survey

Examples of some of the consultations that we have supported and led on include;

- Dog Fouling
- Flood Alleviation Schemes & Flood Risk Management Strategy
- Learning Disabilities Day Services
- Heritage
- Supported Living Service
- Participation Strategy
- Budget Consultation
- Service Changes
- Corporate Plan
- Strategic Equalities Plan.

Examples of how residents and communities have been involved in the Council's work in 2023 include:

- Engaging with Schools and young people via Instagram and in school settings
- Continued engagement and involvement with residents and communities in service changes that impact them, so that their voices are heard in Council decisions.
- Continued engagement with the Older People's Advisory Group about issues that could support their ability to get out and about. We have a joint SLA agreement with Age Connects Morgannwg and Older Peoples' Advisory Group to support and engage with older people in RCT;
- We provided a freepost and telephone option for those who cannot engage digitally, in addition to our face-to-face approach;
- We linked in with other services whilst undertaking our face-to-face events, from joining up consultations, to providing waste bags and advice and information;

- We have continued to use digital and social media engagement as one of our methods to obtain resident views and promote consultations;
- Continued to make our consultations more accessible to residents by increasing the use and availability of easy to read materials.

All consultations that we undertake we attempt to engage with the widest range of people that we can. We aim to capture the views of all groups that live within the borough and aim to represent all their opinions and concerns. We continue to provide Easy Read versions of all service change consultations and collect demographic equality information for services to use to inform their decisions making and the Impact Assessment Process.

We continue to monitor questions we include in surveys, relating to Equalities and Welsh Language. The data collected is used to inform the Council's decision-making process, an Equality Impact Assessment and a Welsh Language Impact Assessment must be prepared in order to consider the possible relevant impacts from any proposals.

Work has continued throughout 2023 to provide support to officers preparing Equalities & Socio-economic and Welsh Language Impact Assessments for strategy and policy developments. Support has ranged from provision of simple data outputs (largely based upon data from Census 2021 and the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD)) to in-depth research (into, for example, housing conditions and tenure patterns and cross reference to income deprivation and material deprivation indicators) and analysis of qualitative and third-party reporting on different factors.

6. Equality Objectives

In 2019 we launched our Strategic Equality Plan (2019-2022). To aid the development of appropriate and relevant equality objectives the Equality and Human Rights Commission report 'How Fair is Wales 2018' was the main reference source. Equality objectives were aligned to well-being goals contained in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, specifically a 'More Equal Wales' and a 'Wales of Cohesive Communities'.

A comprehensive engagement process was undertaken with the public and targeted engagement was undertaken with community groups that reflect the 'protected characteristics' contained within the Equality Act 2010.

From this engagement and consultation with a number of Council service areas the following equality objectives were identified and published in the [Strategic Equality Plan 2019-2022](#). The equality objectives are:

- Objective 1 To better understand the needs of our communities and understand the barriers they face to thrive;
- Objective 2 To reduce inequalities that exist within our communities;
- Objective 3 To promote safe communities;
- Objective 4 To reduce the gender pay gap;
- Objective 5 To create an inclusive workforce.

An action plan has been developed outlining specific actions in relation to each equality objective. These actions will be monitored through service area delivery plans.

Outlined below, we show our progress towards the equality objectives. It should be noted that not all actions were due to commence in the financial year 2019-2020 and these will be progressed in following years.

Objective 1 – To better understand the needs of our communities and understand the barriers they face to thrive

Within this equality objective there are a number of areas that require action. The progress towards these actions is outlined below.

Action 1 - Identify community groups that represent the full diversity of the citizens of Rhondda Cynon Taf and develop accessible communication channels with them.

The Council has many well established links with community groups across RCT, for example, Youth Forums, Older People's Advisory Groups and the Disability Forum. The focus of this action is to engage with under-represented minority groups and individuals that have not had regular communication routes with the Council.

Community Cohesion Group

The Community Cohesion Group has a new, wide range of partners invited to attend from varied agencies and backgrounds across Cwm Taf. This has allowed for the sharing of information and allowed us to open up communications in newly identified minority groups. The Co-ordinator of [Valleys Ethnic Minorities Support \(VEMS\)](#) is now the group Chair and is able to pass on key information about support and events available in RCT to the individuals she comes in to contact with as part of VEMS. New members of the group such as the Widening Participation Officer from the University of South Wales has assisted with the identification of large numbers of Nigerian students who were seeking support from the foodbanks and the local authority in general.

Disability Forum

We held our first face-to-face Disability Forum meeting since the Covid-19 pandemic in November 2022. Following an engagement exercise with members, we now plan to hold Disability Forum meetings regionally across the county borough to make meetings more accessible by public transport and increase the effectiveness of meetings. We plan to hold our first regional meeting in the Cynon area in June 2023.

Facilitating the Disability Forum is very important as it provides a positive space where members are able to raise any issues or experiences with accessing Council services, and Council officers can feedback directly any action taken and improvements to services as a result. In addition, the Forum provides a social element to members which allows them to feel part of a community, and less isolated.

General Engagement

The relaxing of all restrictions post Covid-19 meant that general engagement within the community could recommence. Town centre engagement projects throughout Hate Crime Awareness Week and during other key times of the year in areas such as local libraries, colleges and schools has opened up communication channels with all members of the community. Joint engagement sessions with officers from South Wales Police have taken place on a more regular basis.

LGBT+ History Timeline

In conjunction with Welsh Government, we created an LGBTQ+ History Timeline for RCT. This timeline celebrates RCT from the LGBTQ+ perspective, highlighting people and events that show that LGBTQ+ people have always played an important part in our county's history. The timeline allows all citizens of RCT to contribute to the project, to reflect the ongoing experiences of LGBTQ+ people, in RCT. We received great feedback from attendees at the launch event at Rhondda Heritage Park.

Project Unity

We were very pleased to support [Project Unity](#) (support group/project for those who identify as LGBTQ+) in relaunching in RCT following the pandemic as it offers much needed support and a voice for those who identify as LGBTQ+. Together with the Cohesion team, Project Unity has been able to relaunch and organise several events. These include a memorial event at Aberdare Museum to recognise transgender people who died as a result of discrimination and a transgender awareness event at St Elvan's Church along with regular meetings with the

Cohesion team. At the end of 2022-2023, plans were being made for a large Project Unity Summer event to support Pride month.

Safeguarding Week

We assisted South Wales Police in Operation BETSY across Cwm Taf, which was in line with Keep Safe Cymru. The aim of the operation was to identify people who may be vulnerable (some due to memory loss), who may not be known to services and so may not be receiving adequate care and support. This involved visiting town centres to engage with the public in trying to gather intelligence in relation to the above.

We were able to gather details from a substantial amount of people. We can now arrange for them to be visited by local PCSO's as well as being given information in relation to crime prevention.

Town Centre Engagement

Community Cohesion Officers and South Wales Police Officer's engaged with the general public in town centres throughout National Hate Crime Awareness Week. Officer's encouraged conversation with the public and information packs were put together and distributed to provide education and information on Hate Crime, reporting routes and support services available.

Valleys Ethnic Minorities Support

We continue to work closely with [Valleys Ethnic Minorities Support](#) (VEMS) whose members come from many different countries and have a wide ethnic diversity. The group works to overcome barriers to accessing local services, provide training and employment. VEMS meets weekly and these meetings are regularly attended by both the Cohesion team and the Cohesion officers from South Wales Police. Additionally, the co-ordinator of VEMS now chairs the Community Cohesion Group so is able to give regular updates and liaises with a range of partners when it comes to identifying community members from different cultures and countries.

Veterans and Armed Forces Community

Supporting the Armed Forces Community

In 2023, the Council's Armed Forces liaison officer had a key presence at veteran socialising and support groups throughout the county borough, ensuring members of the Armed Forces community received the advice and support required.

The Council are proud to have facilitated the establishment of new veteran support groups such as Woody's Lodge and Fighting for Pride, expanding our support

network. Additionally, in partnership with The Lighthouse Project in Tonyrefail, we offer a free lunch to veterans and their partners on the last Thursday of every month. Overall, we provide weekly support to 7 Armed Forces community groups spread across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

We worked with Maerdy GP Surgery to establish a monthly socialising and support group for veteran patients. The group has been a great success and raised awareness among patients about the Armed Forces Covenant and the support/priorities available to them if required. The GP surgery has gone on to achieve its GP-friendly certificate, keeps a record of all its veterans, and writes out to them each month with an update on Armed Forces events and groups taking place in the local area. The surgery has introduced a dedicated veteran webpage: <https://www.ferndalemaerdymedical.co.uk/patients/veterans/> which highlights the importance of informing GP staff of veteran status.

Commemoration and Celebration - Month of the Military Child

We held an event to celebrate 'Month of the Military Child' for service children and their families who live in Rhondda Cynon Taf. This family fun event was held to celebrate our service children and their unique experiences. Working with Forces Fitness, the Council provided free family fun fitness sessions that were conducted at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, Pontypridd, where 75 children attended. The sessions offered fun and engaging activities that allowed service children the opportunity to celebrate and to meet with other service children.

Fighting with Pride

We have connected with [Fighting with Pride](#), a charity that supports LGBTQIA+ veterans and serving LGBTQIA+ personnel. This has led to the Council adopting the Pride in Veterans standard, recognising the specific needs that LGBTQIA+ individuals and their families face.

Served and Proud

In 2023, the Council launched 'Served and Proud', this project is aimed at supporting LGBTQ+ veterans through a 2 weekly face to face group. We were pleased to welcome Hannah Blythyn MS, the Lead on Armed Forces and Veterans Policy in Wales, at the launch event. The project has gained momentum since its inception, reflecting a growing recognition of the importance of supporting our veterans. We continue to actively promote the group, with a particular focus on reaching members affected by the historical 'gay ban'. Members of the group contributed valuable insights to the recent LGBT Veterans Independent Review, enhancing our understanding of their experiences and challenges.

Action 2 - Identify the number of refugees living in Rhondda Cynon Taf that are not already included in settlement programmes.

No refugees (excluding those who are part of the resettlement program) became known to the Cohesion team in 2022/2023.

Action 3 - Undertake an employment needs assessment which will inform specific action points relating to young people, disability and ethnicity.

The Communities for Work plus (CfW+) programme is a WG funded programme that can support short-term unemployed, long-term unemployed and economically inactive residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. Individuals with protected characteristics remain the priority target audience of the programme and engagement activity is designed to target under-represented groups, for example, working with the DWP, Disability Employment Advisers (DEA's), the Community Engagement Steering Group, Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS) and Over 50s Forums to expand reach and target provision.

The SPF People and Skills Programme is a UK Government funded programme, supporting those furthest from the labour market to engage in community-based activity and those who are employed but experiencing in-work poverty and/or under-employment factors.

Early in 2023, the 2 programmes aligned under the Employability Umbrella of 'RCTCBC Work and Skills', one holistic and inclusive programme using the differing funding streams to ensure all residents of RCT can access employment related support. This holistic programme replaced the previous ESF funded programme, whereby not all residents were eligible for support due to economic status or postcode restrictions placed on the Council by the funder.

Of 1500 participants supported within the 3-year period:

- 550 were aged 16-24 years (33%)
- 3 participants identified as transgender (<1%)
- 151 represented Black or Ethnic Minority groups (10%)
- 539 participants disclosed low or no skills (36%)
- 107 individuals stated migrant status (7%)
- 330 disclosed one or more Work Limiting Health conditions (22%)
- 73 participants were registered as disabled (5%)
- 126 were lone parents (8%).

The Employment Needs Assessment is conducted on an individualised basis. All participants completed a needs assessment prior to enrolling to ensure the most appropriate support/provision could be allocated. This needs assessment would then

be reviewed on a 12-weekly basis and as such, action plans amended or where required, signposting to more appropriate support.

Support is also tailored according to an individual's needs and whilst the expectation is a minimum of fortnightly contact, the pace is determined by the participant and isn't time restricted, for example, a participant may be referred due to social isolation, they can be supported to attend community-based groups and to build confidence prior to 'the employability conversation'. The participant is supported to upskill, gain work experience, and apply for work as applicable and as deemed appropriate by them.

The priority cohorts of participants supported within RCT were largely in line with other Welsh Local Authorities:

Priority Cohort	RCTCBC	Across Wales
16-24	33%	34%
Transgender	<1%	1%
Black or Ethnic Minority	10%	18%
Migrant Status	7%	14%
Work Limiting Health Conditions	22%	20%
Disabled People	5%	9%
Lone Parents	8%	8%

**Across Wales statistics provided by WG October 2023*

The number of people supported and the way in which support was offered was impacted significantly due to the pandemic. Unfortunately support ceased entirely early in the pandemic as staff were redeployed to offer support to those who were shielding. When employment support resumed, it was often conducted virtually. The inability to access public venues, particularly Job Centre Plus Offices was a barrier to providing to support at this time.

Case Study

A 46-year-old lady engaged with RCT Work & Skills who had learning difficulties and autism.

Background / What is ...?

LM engaged with RCT Work and Skills after being unemployed all her life due to her disability. She needed an employer to give her a chance after searching for sustainable employment most of her life.

LM lives with her mother in a jobless household in receipt of benefits.

LM was eager to find employment to keep her mind occupied on a daily basis & help her get into a routine.

The engagement...

LM is a re-referral to RCT Work and Skills and previously disengaged due to lack of commitment. During initial engagement, LM was more motivated this time around and was ready to do something for herself. LM eager to start volunteering to gain experience and enhance her CV to find sustainable employment.

We spoke about a confidence course online, but LM informed me she had done these types of courses in the past and they did not work for her. LM felt when she would start volunteering her confidence would improve over time and would help her get into a routine.

We met with a RCT work placement officer in a joint meeting, LM explained she would like to become a cleaner or work in a local café. The RCT work placement officer explained how the volunteering works and gave LM a few options of what was available in Mountain Ash. The one placement that suited LM was in Perthcelyn Community Centre serving refreshments to Mother and Toddler groups that are held at the community centre. LM was also responsible for cleaning the building and locking up the building with another member of staff.

She was volunteering at the Community Centre for 2 days a week for 8 weeks, LM's confidence grew dramatically, and she also completed a Food & Hygiene course whilst at her placement. LM was also attending British Sign Language course at the Community Centre. She was engaging with staff and members of the public weekly.

After supporting LM for a few months, she was then ready to start applying for a part time job as she now had the skills and drive to start moving her life forward. After searching for work with LM an opportunity was emailed through from the RCT Employment Liaison Officer.

The job vacancy was for a cleaning position, 6 hours week in Perthcelyn Office, this position was perfect for LM to start off with. The job vacancy was a Council position, I felt, as a mentor, that this job was perfect for LM with the right guidance and support. I contacted the cleaning manager to explain LM's learning disability and to ask if they would give her a chance. I accompanied LM to an interview and they offered her the job with the view to increasing her hours in the future.

On LM's first week she had training from the Council and was showed what her duties were and what was expected of her.

I have now signed LM off the project as she does not want to increase her hours and feels 6 hours a week is enough for her at the moment. As Perthcelyn is my office base, I keep in regular contact to support LM in any way I can.

Good Practice Shared / Lessons Learned

- Partnership working
- The individual improved in confidence and self-esteem as a result of mentoring.

Outcomes

- Job outcome
- Training outcome

Action 4 - A community profile to be undertaken for all library areas to better understand the needs of customers.

The library service has identified the main catchment areas for each library and then undertaken a profile of each area by using the Community Insights programme which focusses on the following areas:

- population in the wards that fall into the library's catchment area;
- information on children in poverty, people out of work, people in deprived areas, disability, pensioners and other vulnerable groups;
- information on housing characteristics: dwelling types, housing tenure, affordability, overcrowding, age of dwelling and communal establishments;
- information on recorded crime and crime rates;
- information on limited long-term illness, life expectancy and mortality, and general health;
- more information on qualifications, pupil attainment and absences;
- information on people's jobs, job opportunities, income and local businesses;
- information on transport, distance to services and digital services;
- information on physical environment, air quality and neighbourhood classifications.

Analysis of this data creates a good understanding of the differences between the communities each library serves. Use is also made of geographic information available about the level of Welsh speakers in various parts of the borough.

The service also profiles visitor numbers, book issues, downloads, attendance, type and number of events at each library as part of their performance meetings with branches and of course listens to feedback from staff and customers.

All of the above help the service to target help to areas in need and to provide services, outreach and information in those areas. The impact of these interventions can make a real difference to the lives of those accessing the service, examples include:

1. Working with the town BID at Aberdare and Treorchy to provide events that showcase and promote both local businesses and Welsh produce, events have included,

Christmas parade at Aberdare and Treorchy. At Treorchy the event was held on the first Saturday of December, the library would on average see 250 – 300 visitors, on this day 1555 visited.

Comments include:

“Just wonderful!”

“The best Santa we have ever seen!”

2. Places to connect – to help combat loneliness and isolation brought about by closure of other community venues and the cost-of-living crisis. As part of the Places to Connect programme the service organised several ‘Coffee and Craft’ days across libraries. Community members were invited to spend as much time as they liked at libraries, chatting, having tea and coffee and taking part in crafts such as wreath making, card making or playing board games. Comments after the events included:

“This was a fab session, there was a good community spirit, I can’t wait for the next one.”

“I only intended to stay for an hour but ended up staying all day, it was great to sit and chat to people, I hadn’t seen NAME for years!”

“This library is excellent! It’s really given me a lift to be here today.”

3. As a result of feedback from two Ukrainian settlers who attended the above, a staff member, who first came to the UK over a decade ago and who at the time spoke no English, asked to set up a ‘Chat Club’. The club which aims to encourage community members whose first language is not English to meet up, have a coffee and chat to improve their English language skills meets

fortnightly. Membership has grown steadily and currently has members from the Ukraine, Hungary, Poland, Italy and Iran.

4. At one Places to Connect event, a participant mentioned it would be nice to have a puzzle table in the library as people could then spend longer periods of time in the building without feeling self-conscious. As a result of this, and through kind donations from staff, jigsaw tables have been set up in several libraries. A user at Aberdare library has said:

"We drop in a few times a week, my husband and I spend an hour or two picking books and doing the puzzle, our son and granddaughter have joined us too!"

Library borrowers have also started to donate puzzles they have already completed and libraries regularly swap and circulate jigsaws to provide variety.

5. The 'Winter of Wellbeing Scheme' allowed the e-teens library at Treorchy to set up several craft sessions, the aim of which was to encourage skills such as crochet and knitting and to help the participants to open up, talk and share stories to maintain good mental health and wellbeing, participants commented:

"I've been practicing at home and on the bus. I've been making so many things and I'm definitely improving."

"I've enjoyed learning crochet and I'd love to do similar things in the future."

6. In partnership with the Park and Dare Theatre, Treorchy library hosted a 'Fun Palace' event. Both venues were given over to the local community who then hosted events and workshops to show the hobbies and crafts available in the local community. The day promoted these groups as a way of increasing people's knowledge, health and wellbeing. Events included:

- Clay modelling and sculpture
- Easter Crafts
- Crystal Art
- Book Craft
- Gonk making
- Face painting
- Pastel painting
- Guitar workshop
- Embroidery and sewing

- Planting and potting
- Silent disco

Participants said:

“Lovely event, well worth attending.”

“Brilliant activity, wonderful staff.”

“We really enjoyed trying the guitar, gardening and embroidery and took away things to continue at home. Also found out about local events e.g. gardening class. My daughter loved painting.”

7. Following a recent refurbishment, Treorchy library repurposed the old entrance and reception area into a gallery that is made available to local groups and artists.

Once such person, a 21 year old photographer and digital artist has autism. He has had difficulty communicating for his whole life and found people around him haven't understood the world he lives in and the impact of his autism on him. As a way of trying to get his grandparents and wider family to understand him better, he set about creating visual representations of his internal experience of autism.

He had such a great response from family and friends that he approached the library service to share his work. He was invited to show his collection *Passing by...* at both the gallery at Treorchy and Pontypridd library.

Both exhibitions were highly successful and since then his work has been featured on ITV's Backstage Programme as well as exhibiting in London, Paris, Amsterdam and New York. The artist has recently been awarded a grant from Arts Council Wales as part of the Creative Steps fund which has helped him to further develop his own art practise as well as supporting his mission to help people to understand some of the challenges faced every day.

The gallery at the library is so popular it is booked several months in advance.

8. In recent years RCT libraries has seen a significant increase in people coming to the library for 'non-traditional' reasons. Increasingly, members of the public identify the library as a safe space where they can obtain help, support and advice.

RCT Council has set up Community Resilience Hubs within four libraries and employ a Neighbourhood Network Team who work with the library, other

Council and public sector services, private/voluntary organisations and Community Groups. An example of help given includes:

A person arrived at Aberdare library seeking help. He had previously used the One4all one stop shop within the building and knew it was a place he could come to for advice.

He informed the library staff that he was out of work, hadn't eaten in several days and had no money for food, gas or electricity and wanted help with accessing a local Foodbank.

The library staff knew that the neighbourhood network team work closely with local foodbanks and have emergency food parcels for vulnerable people. The branch librarian made the person comfortable in the library and then spoke to their line manager who contacted the local Community Co-ordinator with their details. Luckily the person had a mobile telephone and although he did not have any credit to make calls, he could receive them.

The Community Co-ordinator was able to contact them within a few minutes and was able to provide them with an emergency food parcel. They were also able to discuss with them further help and support that would be needed.

The Branch Librarian said:

"Sadly, we are getting more people coming into the library who are really struggling and need our help. It's really good to know that people trust us and will come in. It's also really important to know we can provide the help they require and to know we have colleagues in the Neighbourhood Network Team who we can ring to get immediate support for anyone in need".

The library service also, as part of the Welsh Library Standards, carries out an adult and separate children's customer satisfaction survey every three years. Information from this survey is used to plan library strategy and to shape services. For example, a need for community space identified in both Ferndale and Hirwaun eventually led to the service to creating a meeting room at Hirwaun library and to include separate meeting and IT rooms in Ferndale library.

As well as all of the above activities, the service uses the information in the 'Community Insight' report to target partnership working with organisations such as, South Wales Police, Transport for Wales, Adult Education and wider government to provide information, drop-in sessions and classes.

Action 5 - Undertake research as part of the local housing market needs assessment into the demand for housing needs for disabled people.

The Council applies the data set out in the Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) when determining the mix of new schemes/properties that are being built with the use of social housing grant (SHG). The Service continues to apply this method in order to tackle the demand for housing among disabled people. A new LHMA has recently been completed and is in draft form which will shortly undergo quality assurance and internal scrutiny process and will be submitted to Welsh Government by the end of March 2024.

Action 6 - Undertake a review of the Homestep Scheme to ensure equality monitoring questions are appropriate to identify specific needs with an emphasis on the identification of housing needs for young disabled people.

The Homestep mailing list sign up process has been re-designed and now has a far easier completion process for potential applicants. This mailing list will be used to inform the next LHMA in 2025.

The Housing Strategy and Investment Service is continuing to work with the Council's Digital Improvement Office to review all mailing lists and application forms to bring these online and these are being worked through in order of priority. When the Homestep mailing list is reviewed with the Digital Improvement Office and an application form considered it will include equality monitoring questions to identify specific needs, including those of young disabled people.

Action 7 - Improve and develop the collection and recording of customer equality monitoring information across Council service areas.

In August 2022 the Council launched its internal Equality Monitoring toolkit and standard monitoring form for all staff and service areas to use when conducting monitoring. The purpose of the form and toolkit is to ensure that monitoring practice across the Council is cohesive, and data collected from each service area is robust. As part of the monitoring toolkit and form launch, we held 2 'Lunch and Learn' awareness sessions for managers and staff responsible for monitoring to understand the importance and benefits of equality monitoring, and how to use the new resources.

By standardising our monitoring form and questions asked in equality monitoring across the Council, the data collected as part of monitoring exercises will now be cohesive and easily comparable to a range of external data markers, including the Census. This means that we will be able to tell more easily if our services are accessible and reflect the diversity of our communities. This robust data should also lead to more relevant and local data being used in Equality Impact Assessments,

meaning that we can demonstrate who will be affected by our proposals more accurately.

A standardised monitoring form and questions also means that our monitoring is more inclusive, and as a result more people should feel represented when completing monitoring forms.

Action 8 - To evaluate the experience of disabled people who are on the Homefinder register to understand any barriers to accessing adapted accommodation and to identify improvements to the process as a result.

The RCT Allocation Scheme is currently being reviewed and adapted, housing is one of the main areas within this review. We have commissioned consultants to independently review the way that accessible/adapted housing is applied for and allocated. To assist in this process individuals registered with Homefinder were contacted and given the opportunity to comment on the process. Whilst most did not take up the opportunity, valuable feedback was received from 2 current applicants as well as the Community Occupational Therapist Teams who support disabled applicants in their search for suitable housing. We also evaluated the number of applicants seeking adapted/accessible properties and continue to monitor on a quarterly basis the number of allocations to households needing adapted/accessible homes.

Action 9 - Improve and develop monitoring of customer complaints.

We have implemented a new Customer Record Management System backed by Power BI which better enables us to understand the needs of customers and communities where there are equality considerations.

In Social Care a similar approach is being used to identify the diversity within our communities to ensure that services are focused and targeted where they are most needed through the Annual Social Services Survey. This is in the early stages and will continue to be developed, with outcomes shared with partners in the third sector to inform their delivery plans.

Action 10 - Improve local access to information advice and assistance provision for children, young people and families to promote their participation and engagement.

The **Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS)** has continued to utilise a range of methods to deliver youth work services in 2022-2023, including the provision of information advice and assistance to young people to promote their participation and engagement. The table below shows the Youth Engagement and Participation Service's 'reach' (number of individual young people engaged in open

access activities organised by, and receiving one to one support from, the service) and the number of contacts the service made with anonymous young people during street-based youth work sessions delivered during the year:

Annual reach 2022-23			
11-13yrs			4177
14-16yrs			3860
17-19yrs			999
20-25yrs			191
TOTAL			9277
Number of anonymous contacts 2022-23			
			2042
Reach by age 2022-23			
	% population	Welsh average	Variance
11-16yrs	47%	n/a	n/a
11-19yrs	36%	24%	+12%

In 2022-2023 the Service engaged with 36% of young people aged 11-19yrs, performing 12% above the National Welsh Average.

The Council has continued to invest in mobile youth vehicles utilising core and grant funding to act as hubs in localities where access to a suitable permanent venue is not available. The vehicles are used as mobile youth clubs; as the base for community activities like fun days and street-based youth work; as well as a hub for use at times when an immediate response is required within a community, such as following a serious incident that requires enhanced youth work support. The mobile youth vans continue to prove an invaluable resource, thus a fourth vehicle was purchased in line with the priorities of the Cabinet. The ongoing expansion of the community street-based youth work supported by the YEPS vehicles will remain a priority in line with available funding opportunities. The availability of the vans as a resource has allowed the service to carry out an additional 107 sessions of activities, increasing the number of contacts by 1,719 in 2022-2023.

YEPS uses numerous ways to communicate with young people, parents/carers and community members such as emails, text messaging, posters, leaflets, social media platforms and an app which was launched in 2022. YEPS also has a Youth Officer solely responsible for developing digitalisation and promotion, supported by at least one Social Media Champion in each cluster. Young people have been at the heart of the development of the app, which has transformed user engagement and improved service delivery; as well as promoting the service and its activities and support on offer, the app enables parents and guardians to complete consent forms for off-site

activities. The numbers of followers for each of the social media platforms is steadily increasing year on year as the service continues to promote events, activities and use live streams to engage followers.

2022-23	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	Youtube
Number of followers	4, 266 (+814)	2, 917 (+206)	1, 761 (+97)	382 (+12)
Page reach/visits	84, 023	22, 971	36, 046	6, 000 (-4,336)

The YEPS website, was rebranded as YEPS.wales in 2022 aligning with the new app and continues to provide access information, advice and guidance for young people around a number of themes such as money management, travel etc. The website usage data is monitored monthly with 39,700 users accessing the website in 2022-2023 totalling 66,500 views. The Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) section of the website is also growing in prominence as it's continuously updated to ensure young people have easy, 24-hour online access to IAG on several key issues.

The **Family Information Service** plays a key role in disseminating information to service users and families. The Family Information Service (FIS) Facebook page currently has 3,500 followers, proving an effective means to communicate with parents, families and members of the public about information, services and activities available to them. The creation of an Instagram social media page for FIS to appeal to the younger RCT residents has been approved and is with the Council's Communication Team to build.

The **RCT Families Website** is a public facing one stop shop for information related to children, young people and families. It provides an important single point of access for information, advice and signposting for children, young people, parents, community members and practitioners to the range of support on offer, providing the means for members of the public to meet their own information advice and assistance needs. The website www.rctfamilies.co.uk has received 14,483 views in 2022-2023 with 2,400 unique visitors with the 'looking for information' within the Parents/Carer section being the most popular. A series of internal staff demonstrations of the RCT Families website have been delivered to promote it's use amongst professionals and their service users. QR codes have also been generated for service user accessibility that front-facing staff can use in the community.

Work is underway to review the usage of the three **Children and Family Centres** and consider opportunities to increase the use of the buildings and engagement with the wider community linking in with neighbourhood network developments. We continue to work with community and third sector organisations through the Community Support Steering Group. We are also planning to undertake informal

sessions with parents to try and establish parent forums, making sure that any developments meet the needs of the families and the wider communities. As part of the RCT Families website and social media opportunities, the promotion and profile of the Centres is being raised, showing the resources available and signposting to sources of advice and support in community settings.

The first **Your Voice Survey** since the pandemic was delivered this year by YEPS and saw the views of almost 5,000 young people in schools, colleges, youth clubs and other community settings across the county borough, representing the diversity of young people living, being educated or working in RCT. Young people were given the opportunity to complete a series of interactive questions on a range of thematic areas, including health and wellbeing, learning and education, leisure and culture and community safety. The findings have been reported to the Senior Management Teams in Public Health and Protection, Education and Children’s Services as well as Senior Leadership and will be used to inform priorities for the Service and its partners to meet the needs of young people aged 11-25.

YEPS continues to support young people’s participation through **Youth Forum** work. In 2022-2023 YEPS hosted 97 Youth Forum sessions, attended by 204 young people. YEPS’ thematic forums have become well embedded throughout 2022-23; the voice of the young people has influenced several successful service developments which have addressed the needs of 11-25 year olds, as outlined in the table below. However, in an effort to recruit larger numbers of participants and actioning the voice of the young people in the forums, from April 2023, the service amended the organisation of the forums as travel was proving an obstacle to participation for many, with forums returning to localities across Rhondda, Cynon and Taf; each locality has selected a specific focus area, thus the thematic element has been retained.

Thematic forum	Positive outcomes achieved
Equality & Diversity / Cynon Forum	White ribbon event LGBTQ+ weekly meetings Supporting the Festival of Unity Live and Let Pride Art Exhibition
Community Safety / Taf Forum	Anti-Racism Black Asian and Minority Ethnic event Around the World Operation Bang Work with Crime Stoppers and Police Crime Commissioner to ensure young people know how to report crime
Mental Health & Wellbeing / Rhondda Forum	Mental Health animation which has been nominated for a national Youth Excellence award
Environment & Sustainability	Capel Swap Shop Currently organising an event ‘YEPS wears Prada’ (an environmentally friendly fashion show)

	Currently organising a tree planting activity to enhance young peoples' understanding the importance of looking after our local wildlife
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The RCT's **County Youth Forum (CYF)** is the main group for ensuring that the voice of as many young people in RCT can be collated and shared with relevant partners and decision makers. Numbers throughout 2022-2023 remained low and engagement from schools was sporadic; following consultation with young people, the CYF meetings were moved from afterschool sessions when it transpired transport was often an issue, to during half term holidays. This amendment has proven successful with 21 young people now attending, representing 8 schools. However, there is still work required to engage other schools to ensure all young people across RCT are given the opportunity to have their voices heard.

YEPS has developed its **Young Editors Programme** as an additional means to actively promote the work of young people, led by young people. This has steadily become more popular throughout 2022-23, with 8 young people (an increase of 5 from last year) now active members and becoming 'Content Creators'. These young people have produced a short video on young people's rights as part of World Mental Health Day, with further plans to produce content related to various issues affecting young people, including the promotion of YEPS' provision. They have also held interviews with authors for book launches, elected members and young people at the RCT Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic event and visited various youth clubs.

OBJECTIVE 2 – To reduce inequalities that exist within our communities

Within this equality objective there are a number of areas that require action. The progress towards these actions is outlined below:

Action 1 - A comprehensive review of the recruitment and selection process to increase the diversity of applicants.

We have created a [careers/jobs microsite](#) to develop our employer brand and attract more applicants to apply for our jobs. Our job description template was also redesigned to complement the website. We appointed a Graduate Officer in Recruitment, Social Media and Marketing who joined us in May 2022. This post developed recruitment marketing by utilising social media and more traditional methods of advertising such as posters, print, roundabout and billboard advertising. Enhanced recruitment campaigns were delivered, and specialist advice was available to managers to advertise posts, attract applicants, increase the use of social media platforms and targeted advertising, including paid Facebook advertising.

In some high priority campaigns, to encourage more applicants, we offered support to complete applications for high priority posts at jobs fairs and focus on training and support available to encourage more people to apply for jobs.

We undertook a recruitment survey with our managers. 82% of recruiting managers were highly satisfied with their recruitment marketing support and 18% satisfied; with the majority of managers recruiting for hard to fill posts (some with multiple vacancies did not fill them all but believed they filled more posts than they would have without the intervention). Managers also reported that they were getting a higher number of applications and better quality in terms of suitability and understanding the role.

LinkedIn has been developed with engagement work and a pilot 12 month subscription package to advertise Council vacancies. The pilot has received positive feedback from managers, in particular regarding recruitment for specialist and technical posts. Some feedback from recruiting managers is listed below:

- “We did get a higher number of more experienced applicants than previously..”
- “Following the adverts you arranged for me earlier this year, we were successful in appointing a senior engineer, so thank you for your input which really helped.”
- “Very helpful supporting my needs to advertise a crucial vacant post that had been difficult to gain interest in.”

Enhanced engagement work in terms of LinkedIn content has also been undertaken to raise our profile as an employer.

An education/schools recruitment microsite is also close to being launched, content written and test pages have been produced, other complimentary content such as video currently in final stages of production.

Action 2 - Develop and implement an action plan based on the employment needs assessment specifically in relation to young people, disability and ethnicity.

The CfW+ programme’s Facebook and web pages were redeveloped within the period, with the aim of expanding reach and increasing self-referrals onto the programme.

The Work and Skills teams work closely with DWP, Careers Wales and other Council services to not only generate referrals but to ensure a targeted approach of RCT residents with protected characteristics. Regular meetings with DWP highlight any shortfalls of referrals within specific Job Centre Plus Offices, together with any shortfalls of referrals that fail to represent priority cohorts. This has been difficult at times due to the DWP Commissioned Maximus offer, which targets the same customer groups.

Activity and the usual forward planning, proactive approach to delivery has been impacted by the following factors during the period of the current Strategic Equality Plan.

- funding requirements i.e. ensuring programme delivery is in-line with Government approved delivery plans and a changing eligibility criteria
- the referrals received from third parties, often those closer to the labour market, are referred with the desire to quickly enter employment, as opposed to the intended target audience of those with complex needs or several barriers to employment
- an internal Management of Change process within the period that meant a significant restructuring of staff and changes in funding streams/project guidance
- a reactive approach due to the ongoing difficulties that surrounded the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and mass redundancies within RCT due to the closure of large employers, such as Garth Bakery and the UK Windows and Doors Group.

That said, activity to reduce inequalities that exist within our communities included:

Disability Confident event

Work and Skills hosted a joint event with DWP at the Rhondda Heritage Park Hotel to raise awareness to employers of the Disability Confident Scheme. 19 employers and partners attended, many of whom were already registered at Disability Confident Levels 1,2 & 3. 5 had no prior involvement in the scheme. By the end of the event all 5 were successfully registered as Disability Confident Level 1. This brought the number of Disability Confident registered employers in RCT to 100, the highest number of DC registered Employers within a Local Authority in Wales.

Childcare Choices

Work and Skills supported the Early Years team to deliver a Pilot Childcare Choices Event, aimed at lone parents wishing to pursue a career that would compliment their own childcare needs. Whilst the event was small, all attendees enrolled for Employment Mentoring to upskill and receive support to enter the sector but also to benefit from the Work and Skills barrier fund, which helped with DBS checks, childcare for the duration of training and travel to the training. Further sessions are planned for 2024.

Employment Routes

The Employment Routes programme is a training programme built around specific employer needs and employment opportunities. The Real Skills programme is a pathway specifically designed for 16–24-year-olds with no/low skills and no work experience. Real Skills offers learning opportunities through hands-on project work, usually within community venues in need of a new lease of life, for example, Pontypridd Foodbank stores had fallen into disrepair, 2 project cohorts supported the redevelopment of the site, making the space more fit for purpose.

SPF Service Level Agreement with Leisure and YEPS

Service Level Agreements were put in place during the inception of the SPF People and Skills to enable both Leisure and YEPS to help Work and Skills achieve targets around improving physical and mental health of economically inactive RCT residents. Low intensity Leisure activities were designed to target less-active individuals and engage them in physical, group-based activities.

YEPS activity under the SLA encourages young people to engage in gaining life skills, to complete volunteering opportunities and to receive support to gain better insight into employer expectations, all of which will contribute to project outcomes whilst maximising the SPF grant through the support of internal Council services.

Response to UK Windows and Doors Closure

When the UK Windows and Doors Group closed suddenly there was extreme concern for the 400+ employees impacted, many of whom who had worked within the same industry and area for 40+ years. The RCT Work and Skills team, together with DWP and Careers Wales, worked quickly to facilitate an Information, Support and Recruitment event. More than 70 employers, partners and training providers attended, with all employers offering live vacancies on the day. More than 300 individuals affected by the closure attended the event. Many of the attendees spoke of hidden disabilities, an inability to read and write that had remained hidden within their lengthy employment, impacted mental health and extreme anxiety as to what

would happen next. Confidential meeting spaces were offered on the day along with follow up support sessions to ensure all individuals could access tailored support to suit their individual needs. 3 attendees left the event having already been offered a job and start date, whilst 50+ attendees had interviews/call backs scheduled. The support of the individuals still facing unemployment continues through 1-1 mentoring.

In-Work Support

The In-Work support element of the programme is also inclusive of anyone who is in paid work and wishing to upskill and/or seek alternative employment. More recent activity has sought to support those who are employed by RCTCBC but facing barriers to conducting their current role. This could be due to changes in physical or mental health. An employee recently took Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) as they were no longer able to conduct their physical role. The development of this piece of work will seek to negate the need for Voluntary Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy through retraining and support to diversify in the workplace.

Action 3 - Recommend within the adapted housing review that the Council commits to increasing the number of adapted and accessible homes being built in the area across all tenures.

The Adapted Housing Review has been completed and makes a number of recommendations, including increasing the supply of adapted housing across all tenures. The next steps are to incorporate the recommendations into our working practices and other policies and strategies.

Action 4 - The implementation of the Develop, Invest and Grow project to improve Well-being and equality and diversity outcomes in over 100 small medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Staying Well at Work (formerly Develop Invest & Grow) was led by RCT and part funded by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government provided support to small businesses and their employees. The support was offered at no cost and focusses on a bespoke range of products to improve employee Health and Wellbeing and businesses to manage employees with disabilities/work limiting health conditions.

Funding for the project delivery ended in December 2022. During its lifetime the project engaged with businesses and individual employees throughout RCT. The project focussed on health and wellbeing and provided support to individuals and businesses in terms of HR support, education and clinical treatment and support. The project provided companies with guidance on Diversity and Inclusion, particularly in relation to policy development and provided training on topics including men's health issues, women's health issues, menopause, mental health and

wellbeing. The project also provided specific support to participants around individual health issues and fitness for work.

Action 5 - To provide accessible information to the public through a variety of formats with a specific focus on improving accessibility of information for the Deaf community.

All Customer Care activities are available via the Council's Contact Centre and through its website and online forms. This allows users to access information and perform transactional services through different channels, according to their preference and needs. The Digital Improvement Office works closely with service areas and the Corporate Web and Communication Teams, to ensure that the information available online is of an appropriate level of detail to allow users to self-serve as much as possible, thus providing them with access to information and request services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, without limitation of Council opening hours.

Analytics show that there is a rising trend in usage of webpages to access information and request services, with a significant increase in the percentage of customer care interactions via the web and mobile devices from 87.9% in 2018-2019 to 94.9% in 2022-2023.

Action 6 - Undertake development of the use of assistive technology within the Digital Strategy.

In 2022-2023, the Council has developed its new Digital Strategy for 2022-2026, setting out its vision and objectives for digital and technological opportunities as 'enablers' to help achieve its wider corporate goals. The strategy is formed around 4 key principles, one of which is digital solutions and service design. A key part of this strand of the strategy focuses on the investigation and application of emerging technologies to support services to deliver more effective solutions to their users. This includes the use of assistive technology for use by both staff and service users, to offer greater support and provide insight for targeted intervention where resources are more limited. Such areas being considered include the use of technology to reduce the administrative burden on teams through the application of transcribing technologies to reduce the requirement for minute taking tasks, allowing staffing capacity to be re-directed to other tasks. In addition, the Council is scoping the opportunity to pilot unobtrusive sensors within service users' homes to measure behavioural patterns of basic household tasks and activities. This type of technology will highlight changes in patterns of these activities and offer an alerting mechanism to predict and prevent deterioration in general health, in order to intervene at an earlier point in the service user's decline, improving their chances of a faster recovery.

Action 7 - To strengthen existing Homefinder processes to take into account equality and diversity best practice.

Equalities is part of the Allocation Scheme review that is currently being undertaken. Staff from the Diversity and Inclusion team have attended task and finish groups to provide advice and assistance with the application process.

Homefinder operates a face-to-face service in Sardis House for individuals wishing to make an application but do not have access to a telephone or the internet. Homefinder has also improved accessibility for individuals seeking to apply for housing by establishing a presence in One4All Centres in Aberdare and Treorchy every week and these are proving to be successful.

Homefinder continues to attend the Disability Forum and attendees' feedback relevant information from this community network.

Action 8 - To further develop an inclusive approach to apprenticeships.

Since 2018, when this action was agreed, we have recruited 2011 apprentices into various service areas across the Council. The Employment, Education and Training team extensively advertise and promote vacancies to internal and external stakeholders. Delivering workshops and webinars to colleges, Department for Work and Pensions, Careers Wales, Communities For Work and supported agencies such as Elite, to encourage individuals from all backgrounds and those with disabilities to apply. Our recruitment process ensures we provide reasonable adjustments to individuals to assist them with the process. For example, we have allocated additional time on assessments, interview questions issued early, delivered virtual interviews etc. The statistics below highlight the success and sustainability of the apprenticeship scheme.

2018 – 2023

Starts 2011 Female 92 Male 119

Obtained Jobs	108	92%
External employment	15	13%
Internal Employment (RCT Council)	93	80%
Other Outcomes	5	4%
No Outcome	4	3%

Action 9 - Strengthen the scrutiny process for the Equality Impact Assessment process.

In last year's report we outlined the introduction of the Review Panel which was established to strengthen the scrutiny of completed equality impact assessments and Welsh Language impact assessments. Senior officers from across the Council sit on the Review Panel to review the impact assessments, checking that relevant data and evidence have been used to inform decision making.

The Review Panel has now become an established governance process which is adding value to the decision-making process. It has helped raise awareness of the importance and relevance of the use of data and evidence in the impact assessment process. Feedback from Council officers has been positive about the value of the process in developing their understanding of equality matters.

To support this process, along with guidance documents and impact assessment examples, a Data Library dashboard has been created, with the help of Data Insights and GIS team, to provide Council officers with relevant information about the people and places within RCT.

Action 10 - Encourage the uptake of Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement through reviewing service delivery models and an effective marketing strategy.

All [Catering Services web pages](#) have been updated to promote the uptake of eFSM with easy access hyperlinks for application. The Council's media team continue to share social media messages promoting eFSM take-up.

Posters and links to You Tube videos, promoting the importance of applying for free school meals have been forwarded to all RCT schools.

Here is the Welsh version of the You Tube video <https://youtube.com/shorts/gIqKtJgy0F4>

Here is the English version of the You Tube video <https://youtube.com/shorts/LjbXTxNhCUI>

Action 11 - Take a strategic approach to our town centres which will benefit from investment to ensure an attractive and accessible environment for local businesses, shoppers, residents and visitors.

Prosperity and Development's Service Delivery Plan sets out a number of key service priorities for 2022-2023, one of which includes:

Modernise our town centres – by building on their role as centres for social inclusion, local economic opportunity and the provision of services. By recognising their changing role from retail centres to social destinations and helping them to adapt to changes in economic and customers' expectations.

In supporting the delivery of local economic activities whilst promoting social inclusivity the Council have continued to engage with a variety of groups and stakeholders in delivering new projects and initiatives across our town centres and to seek their views on implementing appropriate and timely measures.

1. Following a successful informal early engagement exercise to help inform a draft "Strategy for Aberdare Town Centre", a period of formal consultation was undertaken which sought the views and opinions of a wide range of stakeholders from within Aberdare town centre and the wider communities it serves on the draft strategy. The consultation concluded that the draft strategy was positively received and largely aligned to the towns identified strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. It also largely supported the Strategic Objectives and Investment Themes set out in the strategy which would be used to coordinate future investment in the town. The strategy was formally adopted by the Council and the approach taken in developing the strategy has helped to foster a sense of local ownership and commitment.
2. The Council delivered a series of Christmas Events within 4 of its 8 town centres and worked collaboratively with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and Town and Community Councils to deliver an event in the 4 remaining town centres. The events provided individuals and families with an affordable festive celebration and delivered increased town centre footfall to support local businesses. The events were supported by free car parking in all Council owned town centre car parks and were well attended and positively received.
3. The Council delivered a programme of free to access family activities in Pontypridd and Mountain Ash town centres during the Summer holiday period. The activities were funded using prize money received from the 2022 Visa sponsored Let's Celebrate Towns Awards, where Pontypridd won the Champion award and Mountain Ash the Rising Star award for Wales. The Champion award highlights towns that have demonstrated an exceptional ability to create a supportive environment that helps businesses and communities to thrive, whilst the Rising Star award recognises up-and-coming towns that are on their way to transforming the local economic environment and community.
4. The Council have continued to work collaboratively with business groups and other stakeholders to deliver a range of projects and community focused events across our town centres. These include working collaboratively with the Our Aberdare BID to deliver a Summer programme of activities throughout Aberdare town centre and with the Love Treorchy BID to deliver the town's annual Food & Drink Festival. Additional projects have delivered seasonal town centre floral displays, promotional videos and festive lighting.

5. The Council's Town Centre Team and Employment, Education & Training Team worked collaboratively with the Your Pontypridd BID to deliver a programme that provided a number of work placement opportunities for Children Looked After throughout Pontypridd town centre. The programme, which supports the Council's commitment as a Corporate Parent, was well received and delivered many benefits for both the young people and businesses that took part. The programme in Pontypridd builds upon the successful pilot programme delivered in Treorchy town centre in 2022 and the programme is scheduled to be extended further to include Aberdare town centre in 2024.

6. The Council has commenced a Wayfinding Project in Pontypridd town centre. In collaboration with the Your Pontypridd BID and Town Council the project has developed a Wayfinding Strategy that sets out a number of recommendations for implementation that will improve accessibility and wayfinding for residents and visitors in Pontypridd town centre.

OBJECTIVE 3 – TO PROMOTE SAFE COMMUNITIES

Within this equality objective there are a number of areas that require action. The progress towards these actions is outlined below.

Action 1 - Review, develop and re-implement the Hate Crime Strategy.

In 2022-2023, the Hate Crime strategy was implemented to its fullest following the Covid-19 pandemic. The relaxing of most restrictions made this possible, however, some challenges still remained, such as the amount of community groups and projects that no longer exist due to ending or folding during the pandemic. This has meant having to take a 'starting from scratch' approach to what were annual events and well-established groups etc.

Be My Voice Campaign

The 'Be My Voice' campaign was launched through the Council's Social Media pages with 2 moving videos of members of the People First charity who spoke about their experience of being the victims of hate crime as a result of their learning disabilities.

The campaign seeks to encourage the wider community not only to recognise Learning Disability Hate Crime, but also to report incidents that they witness to the Police.

In addition to the videos, visits were made to local schools, colleges and businesses to undertake awareness raising workshops with the aim of encouraging understanding and reporting processes. The videos were extremely well received by the public, with Darren's video receiving almost 4000 views on the Council's Facebook pages, multiple shares and positive comments and the films were subsequently picked up by Wales Online where the post gained tremendous support.

National Hate Crime Awareness Week

The Cohesion team alongside Cohesion officers from South Wales Police undertook a week long campaign of engagement, events and visits to promote awareness during NHCAW that included:

- Tuesday 11th - hate crime workshop with Aberdare College - distributing merchandise and engaging in meaningful discussions with the students;
- Tuesday 11th - mobile police station outside Aberdare Library to engage with members of the local community;
- Wednesday 12th – NHS Training at Tonteg Hospital.

School Visits

We were pleased to be able to initiate more school visits. In October, Cohesion Officers visited Treorchy Comprehensive School and engaged in 'Hate Crime and Mental Health' discussions with various year 11 pupils. Additionally, the Youth Ambassador Programme continued at Treorchy Comprehensive School.

South Wales Police – Hate Crime data for Rhondda Cynon Taf

Table 1a. Hate Crimes by characteristic

Disability	88
Race	278
Religion	20
Sexual Orientation	147
Transgender	34

Table 1b. Hate Crimes by area

Rhondda	139
Cynon	94
Taf	165
Merthyr	145

Table 1c. Hate Crime by month (2022)

January	29
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February	41
March	48
April	46
May	55
June	51
July	33
August	52
September	53
October	53
November	43
December	39

Action 2 - Review the existing approach to tackling modern slavery.

Modern Slavery / Human Trafficking is currently an agenda item on the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Serious and Organised Crime Board. Updates are provided by the lead South Wales Police officer for the area. There are established processes in place when modern slavery / human trafficking is suspected.

The Community Safety Partnership review is still taking place and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Board is scheduled to be in place for April 2024.

Action 3 - As part of Education's Well-being Strategy we will develop a programme for schools about raising awareness of emotional abuse in relationships.

We have undertaken a number of projects with young people about healthy relationships.

Spectacle Theatre - Making Monsters

This project aimed to teach young people about relationships, both healthy and unhealthy, provide an opportunity to talk openly about feelings and experiences, and to promote and identify help seeking behaviour.

Drama techniques have been known to enhance emotional intelligence, communication skills, develop curiosity and confidence. (Van de Water, 2021)

Themes related to healthy relationships were identified from child focus groups:

- How you express feelings and have disagreements
- Trust
- Social connection
- Not responding to peer pressure (sending indecent images of self)

- Sense of safety
- Being supported.

The outcomes of this project:

- 71% of pupils felt they knew where to go for support compared to 61% prior to the project;
- 95% of pupils said they understand domestic violence, compared to 68% prior to the project;
- 82% of pupils said they are good at listening to someone whose opinions differ, compared to 57% prior to the project
- After the project 100% of adult participants said they were extremely confident or quite confident to support children

Healthy Relationship Programme – Real love Rocks, Barnardo’s

This resource explores:

- Relationships - What they are and what makes a happy, safe, fair and consensual relationship.
- Child Sexual Exploitation - What it means, the different ways it might happen and where to get help if needed.
- Keeping Safe - Encouraging young people to think about how to stay safe when they are out and about; highlighting the added risk that alcohol, drugs or not being in contact with parents/careers can bring.
- Impact of Watching Porn and Sexting - The impact of watching porn and the possible consequences. The risks involved in sexting and how to stay safe online.

Pupil data indicated the following:

	Pre project %	Post project %
Confused about their feelings a lot of the time or all the time	31.7	5.6
Know how emotions feel in their body quite a lot of time	14	29.7
Could some of the time ask someone for help when they were feeling sad, angry or worried	26.31	34.4
Could never ask someone for help when they were feeling sad, angry or worried	7.4	14.3
There are people who care about them all of the time.	41	41.7

There are people who care about them quite a lot of the time.	40	33.3
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- Pupils were asked to name private body parts before and after the project. Post project fewer slang words were used.
- Staff confidence related to teaching pupils about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was 17% very confident pre project, rising to 100% post project.

10 secondary schools and 7 primary schools participated in this project.

Action 4 - Pilot the PERMA model in secondary schools.

Embedded in Positive Psychology, Seligman's [PERMA](#) model is suggested as an effective framework for understanding and promoting well-being. Furthermore, PERMA tools are suggested as an easily understood measure which can assess various dimensions of pupil well-being and can account for fluctuations in well-being over time.

16 secondary schools in RCT have now received training and support to use the PERMA wellbeing tool. It has been successfully used in a variety of ways across these schools to meet their bespoke needs and priorities. This includes:

- A mechanism to identify pupils requiring wellbeing support.
- A method to evaluate impact of wellbeing interventions (e.g. [ELSA](#) and Nurture).
- An individual and group intervention using strategy bank.
- PERMA has been used to monitor impact of ELSA intervention.
- PERMA continues to be used as baseline measure for Attendance and Wellbeing Services intervention and support in secondary aged pupils.
- MiSpace wellbeing game now available on all computers not just tablets.
- New Mood tracker functionality introduced and being used by schools to track/monitor pupil mood.

Action 5 - Strengthen collection and analysis of data for bullying incidents in schools.

The anti-bullying return for schools has been updated to collect information regarding each of the protected characteristics from September 2022.

Data is collected on a termly basis and is reviewed as part of the local authority's termly monitoring of schools. Any concerns regarding particular trends or individual schools are addressed. The findings also inform training and support for schools.

Early last academic year, following a pupil perception survey which indicated there may be a higher incidence of bullying than was being reported, work was undertaken with schools to raise awareness of reporting. It is positive that a higher number of incidents are being reported this academic year as pupils will feel more comfortable and staff more confident in identifying bullying behaviours. The data is likely to be a truer reflection.

The changes to the reporting format mean that we are able to analyse by the type of prejudiced related bullying in the last academic year.

- The total number of reported bullying incidents has more than doubled (172 to 424).
- The majority of bullying incidents take place in Year 7 and above.
- In the academic year 2021-2022 the % of total incidents that were prejudice based was 16% (27 incidents); in the academic year 2022-2023 it was 20% (85 incidents).
- 2022-2023 academic year data information reflecting characteristics of prejudice based bullying showed the most prevalent was race, religion and culture 36%. In academic year 2023-2023 each category will be collected as a separate type. Our Anti-racism strategy and action plan will address this, and similarly to above may lead to an increase in reported incidents as understanding increases.
- With a third of prejudiced based incidents being recorded as 'other' this will need further interrogation.

	Number of reported incidents 2022-23					% of reported prejudiced based bullying
	Through	Secondary	Special/PRU	Primary	Total	
Race religion culture	11	14	0	6	31	36
Homophobic	0	3	1	2	6	7
Biphobic	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transphobic	0	1	0	0	1	1
Sexist or sexual	0	0	2	0	2	2
Related to gender identity	0	6	1	0	7	8
Age	0	2	0	0	2	2
ALN or disability	0	0	0	5	5	6
Family status or CLA	0	3	0	4	7	8
Disadvantage	0	0	0	0	0	0
Appearance	0	0	1	9	10	12
Other	0	7	3	4	14	17

20% of all bullying incidents reported in all schools were prejudice based.
22% of all bullying incidents reported in through-schools were prejudice based.
21% of all bullying incidents reported in Secondary schools were prejudice based.
6% of all bullying incidents reported in Special schools and PRUs were prejudice based.
37% of all bullying incidents reported in Primary schools were prejudice based.

Action 6 - Further develop the freedom programme with Women's Aid to better understand specific needs for victims of domestic violence from underrepresented groups.

RCT domestic abuse service, formerly Women's Aid RCT provide a range of projects and services to support those affected by domestic abuse.

All service users are asked to complete equal opportunity monitoring forms. This supports and informs our future services and assists our organisation to identify potential gaps in service delivery.

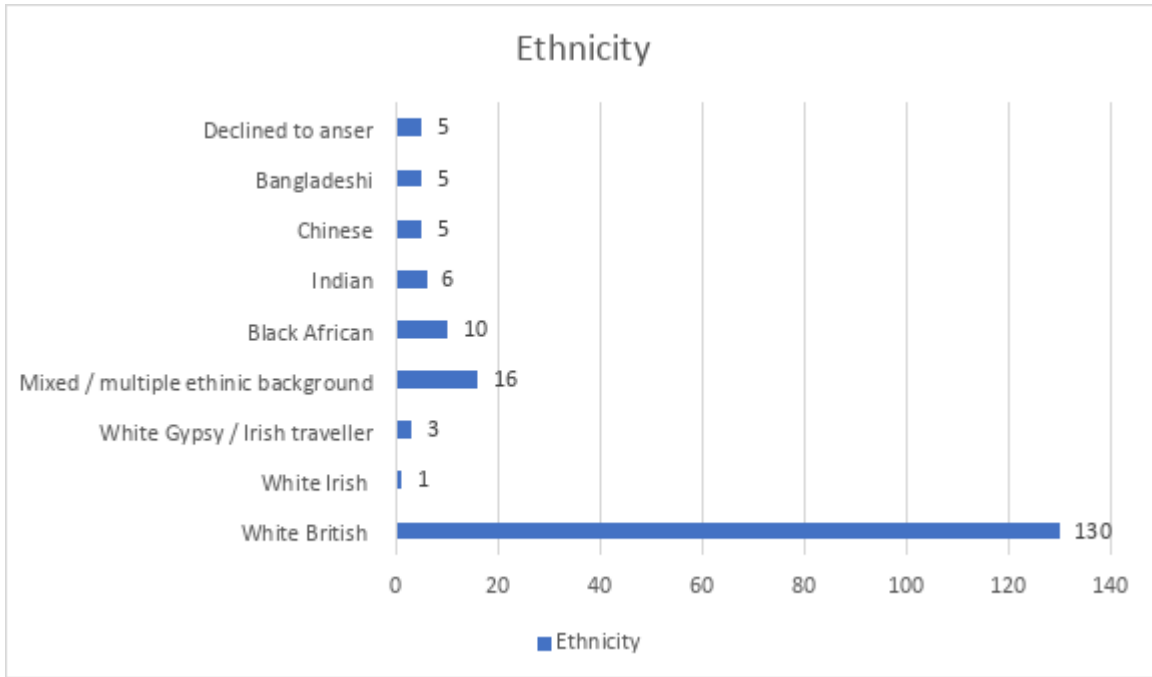
A breakdown of the projects findings for the 2022-23 period can be found below.

Sex and Gender Identity

181 women completed the freedom programme, 3 of which identified as trans female.

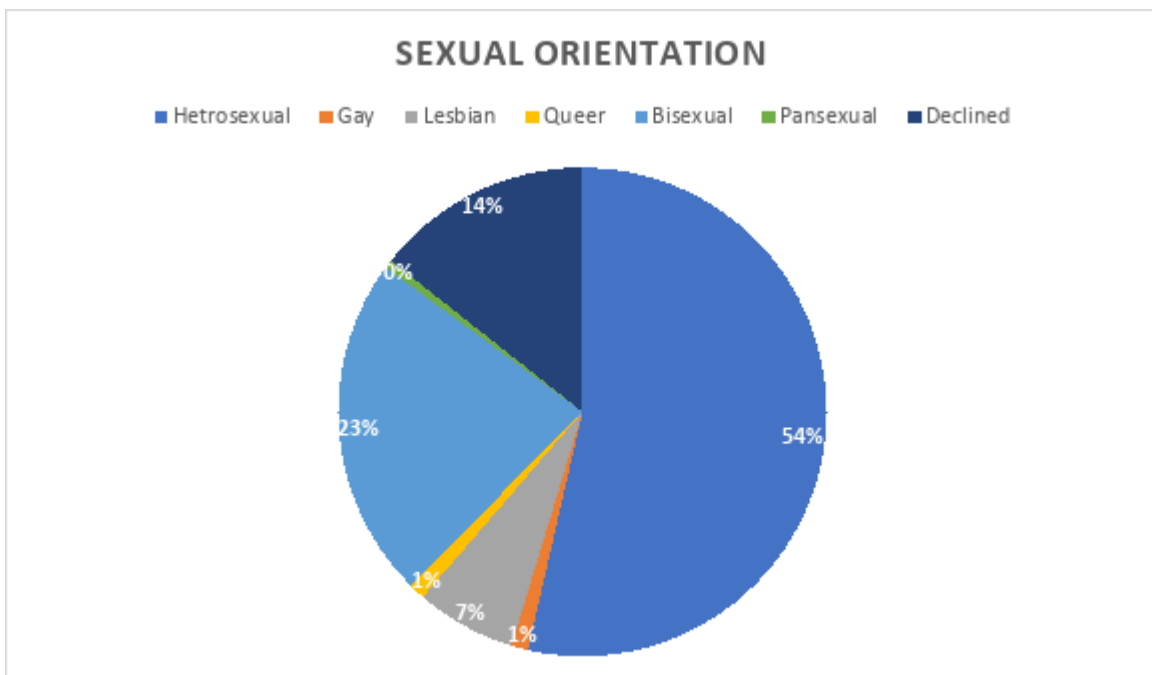
Ethnicity

Our ethnicity data is shown in the chart below. This data seems to correspond with the recent census (2021), in RCT. There is a slightly greater percentage of people identifying from multiple ethnic back grounds, including Black, Chinese, Indian and Bangladeshi accessing services when compared to the census. This could be due to our refuge accommodation attracting people from out of area. Our refuge accommodation will occasionally accept people with no recourse to public funds this often results in a greater ethnic diversity within our refuge accommodation. This feeds/filters into the courses we provide such as the freedom programme.



Sexual orientation

Over time the project has adapted and changed its delivery of the Freedom programme due to participants sexual orientation. Traditionally, the Freedom programme was written to deliver to people in heterosexual relationships; where the female is seen as the victim, and the male is seen as the perpetrator. The need for change has been recognised and alterations have been made to support a model of inclusive delivery. The course has included the recognition of the barriers and the unique challenges faced by the LGBTQIA+ community, is always mindful of its audience and uses gender neutral terms and pronouns.



Disability

17 people who accessed the course identified as having a physical disability. To help ensure that they were able to access our services, group sessions were delivered in an online format or within our centres or community venues with disabled access.

Mental health

Due to the nature of our service 90% of those who accessed the Freedom programme felt that they had a mental health support need, such as anxiety, depression, or PTSD. Online group sessions and the opportunity to meet the team prior to attending groups helped facilitate future attendance.

In addition to monitoring the diversity of our client group the project also monitors the effectiveness of our courses including the Freedom programme, using a distance travelled monitoring and evaluation tool.

Of those who attended the Freedom programme

- 90% stated they were able to recognise the early warning signs of abusive behaviour and felt they had increased ability to keep safe within their relationships.
- 90% stated that they felt increased confidence in their ability to create a safe environment for themselves and their family.
- 95% stated an increased knowledge of appropriate agencies from which they could receive support for their emotional and physical well-being.
- 85% stated they felt an increase in their confidence and self-esteem because of attending the sessions.

OBJECTIVE 4 – TO REDUCE THE GENDER PAY GAP

Within this equality objective there are a number of areas that require action. The progress towards these actions is outlined below.

The Gender Pay Gap

An organisation's gender pay gap is the difference between the average male and female pay rates. It is calculated by dividing the average female hourly pay rate by the average male hourly pay rate.

The Council is required to publish the gender pay gap between male and female employees. It is also required to publish this data separately on employees in Education (teaching employees).

The Equality and Human Rights Commission strongly advise publishing separate full-time and part-time gender pay gaps. It is considered that any pay gap of 5% or more is considered significant and in need of further analysis.

The mean gender pay gap is the difference between the mean hourly rate of pay of male full-pay relevant employees and that of female full-pay relevant employees. A positive figure denotes a gap to the advantage of male employees. A negative figure denotes a gap to the advantage of female employees.

The Equal Pay Audit identified the following Equal Pay gaps:

March 2023

	Combined	Full Time	Part Time
All Employees	9.49%	-10.54%	3.75%
Non Teaching	10.50%	-9.02%	2.67%
Teaching	4.71%	4.15%	7.50%

The gender pay gap for all employees has reduced from 10.24% to 9.49% in 2022.

The main reason for this was the 2022-2023 pay award for NJC employees of an increase of £1,925 (pro rata) on all grades. This had a more positive impact for employees on the lower grades and as the lower grades are occupied predominantly by female staff the gender pay gap decreased.

The average hourly rate for female employees increased by 7.4% from £12.70 to £13.64 whereas the hourly rate for male employees increased by 6.1% from £14.38 to £15.25.

Action 1 - Deliver the roll out of the performance review process for staff at all grades, and

Action 2 - Improve the monitoring of the performance review process.

As reported last year, the existing performance review process has been reviewed. Moving forward, the corporate process will be improved by ensuring that all staff who have worked for the Council for 12 months or more will have received an annual performance review. The previous approach of rolling out the review a staff tier at a time was not effective as operationally, a rollout to all staff was never achieved.

Progress on this has been delayed due to the implementation and testing of the new HR Payroll system. Once the system is fully operational the performance review process will be rolled out across the organisation.

Action 3 - Better understand whether barriers exist regarding the progression of women into senior positions.

The Women Into Leadership programme ran from September 2021 to July 2022. The programme structure provided delivered elements focussing on a variety of topics specific to leadership combined with networking and facilitated discussions. Barriers that were identified through the programme were around exposure to opportunities, mentoring opportunities and coaching.

Action 4 - Understand more about what prevents women returning to the workplace following maternity leave.

A research study was completed which provided a better understanding into the barriers to retention following maternity leave. The study explored social and organisational barriers that contribute to the issue. The recommendations of the study included:

- Undertake further organisational research particularly with women who have returned to work following maternity leave
- Increase awareness and support for women going on maternity leave
- Review and improve monitoring processes
- Provide opportunities for exit interviews.

Action 5 - Support the EHRC pledge 'Working Forward' and implement its recommendations.

Due to a number of factors which impact on the resources available to undertake this work it is likely this work will be carried over to the next Strategic Equality Plan.

OBJECTIVE 5 – TO CREATE AN INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE

Within this equality objective there are a number of areas that require action. The progress towards these actions is outlined below:

Action 1 - Develop a programme of sexual harassment training and awareness.

As previously reported, work in this area was delayed due to the pandemic. We have established a task and finish group to identify key actions and stakeholders. A staff

survey was designed and distributed to Council employees. It was important we had a specific themed survey, and not just included questions in the annual staff survey, to provide a better understanding of sexual harassment in the workplace. We received 602 responses to the survey.

This area of work continues to be a priority, particularly reporting mechanisms. Therefore, we anticipate this area of work will be included in our new Strategic Equality Plan.

Action 2 - Undertake a review of all our mental health activities and develop annual plans which provide education, training and interventions.

This action shifted its focus as the service had to reprioritise its delivery in response to the Covid pandemic. Therefore, a number of staff wellbeing initiatives were introduced which focus on mental health:

- Wellbeing sessions

A range of wellbeing bitesize sessions have been developed and delivered based on staff feedback and absence themes. These include sleep, resilience, stress, anxiety, menopause, finances, women and men's health etc, each session is evaluated separately. 19 wellbeing sessions were delivered during the year.

- Bespoke school counselling service

Funding has been secured to provide a bespoke counselling service for school based staff. Those who require support are contacted within 2 weeks. The service is delivered between 9am to 8pm Monday to Thursday, 9am to 5pm on Friday, and Saturday morning. This service is designed to provide support for those in work and out of work, and the operating hours enable the least disruption to the school day.

- Referrals and appointments

Occupational health provides a range of appointments to assess fitness for work and support staff. Occupational Health managed 2403 referrals and delivered 8526 appointments. Occupational Health developed a wellbeing assessment as part of our mental health focus. This assessment provides a quick intervention to talk to the client, assess the issues and refer on to specific support interventions. 498 wellbeing assessments were conducted.

- Employee assistance programmes (EAP)

CareFirst - an employee assistance programme that delivers a range of wellbeing activities including 24/7 access to in the moment support, an advice centre for financial and legal rights issues, website for online support and information on many health conditions, weekly webinars and an app that staff can use to monitor their mental health and gain interventions to support.

- Wellbeing

Cari - an artificial intelligence system that enables staff to assess their own wellbeing score confidentially and provides a number of support options. This system enables the organisation to target specific interventions based on the data and provides an overall wellbeing score as an organisation.

- Elected member wellbeing sessions

We delivered a number of wellbeing sessions for elected members to raise awareness on physical and mental wellbeing for themselves and those they support in their communities.

- Cost of living challenges

We created a project group with members from across the various services in the Council. This group shared and discussed plans to support communities and staff through the cost of challenges. A staff newsletter was created to signpost both internal and external support available to staff. The newsletters covered a number of themes such as saving money with staff benefits, support for mental health, where to get advice for debt & finances, planning for your future and union support. We have developed 3 newsletters, further developments have included the newsletter being created for staff of the businesses in RCT. The businesses of RCT received their first copy in December 2023 through the town centre forums.

- Partnerships

We have been developing our partnerships through various procurement frameworks and our partners have delivered a number of wellbeing interventions such as Salary finance, our financial partner through staff benefits, provide a number of webinars and guides to support staff through the cost of living challenges.

- Awards

The Council won 2 prestigious awards from CASE UK for supporting mental health.

Action 3 - Source and develop a suite of training for managers on equality and diversity topics.

A suite of 9 Diversity & Inclusion e-Learning modules have been developed for our workforce. The 9 modules are Dignity at Work, Disability and Discrimination, Diversity & Inclusion in the workplace, Equality Act 2010, LGBTQIA+/ Trans Awareness, Neurodiversity Awareness, Race Awareness, Reasonable Adjustments and Unconscious Bias. These have been trialled with service areas and external consultants to ensure their suitability for Council staff and to make sure they are in line with current thinking/legislation.

Feedback on the training has been positive and has provided excellent opportunities to further develop the training program and its content. Roll out to all staff will take place from April 2024.

Action 4 - Become more disability confident as an organisation.

Autism Aware

In April 2022, Senior Leadership and Cabinet approved a trial of the Autism Aware certification training, hosted by Autism Wales. The Council's Human Resources team achieved their Autism Aware Certification after completing this training hosted as part of the trial. This training provided officers with key information on how best to support autistic colleagues and members of the public, and how to adapt processes to ensure barriers are reduced.

Following this successful trial, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's Cabinet Members and Senior Leadership Team also achieved their Autism Aware certification in February 2023, becoming the first Cabinet in Wales to achieve this. Senior Leadership also approved a full roll-out of the training to all Council staff and Elected Members, which is ongoing.

The Council's Digital Improvement Office (DIO) also achieved their certification in February 2023. Several other Council service areas are on their way to achieving their certification this year.

In rolling out the Autism Aware training to our HR officers, officers are now more aware and equipped to support autistic and neurodiverse individuals interacting with the Council, whether internally as a member of staff or externally as a customer or

resident. As a result, Autistic individuals and other neurodiverse people should have better experiences with the Council, where they feel safe and able to access Council services.

Disability Confident

The Council has maintained its Level 2 Disability Employer status under the Disability Confident Scheme and hopes to renew its status in October 2023. The Disability Confident scheme is a recognised standard across the UK. This means that customers and applicants should feel more confident when using our services and know what to expect from the Council.

We continue to improve and provide accessible services for residents and customers and support our disabled staff in the workplace. We continue to develop staff awareness by signposting awareness sessions and training held by the Business Disability Forum, including training on reasonable adjustments. Ensuring our managers and staff have a good understanding of reasonable adjustments and the Council's reasonable adjustments scheme means that staff who require reasonable adjustments have them implemented efficiently.

Action 5 - Undertake workplace equality monitoring.

Following the implementation of a new HR Payroll system, and as part of our continued efforts to ensure our staff HR data is up-to-date and reflects the diversity of our staff, an awareness email was sent to all staff explaining the new data fields included on the new HR and Payroll system. Following this email, over 600 members of staff updated their information, allowing us to better understand the identities and needs of our staff.

Reliable HR data means that we will be able to identify any gaps in recruitment and employment across service areas. However, we recognise there is still work to do on ensuring we have reliable workforce data.

Action 6 - Replicate existing good practice to reflect all protected characteristics.

We continued to raise awareness of significant days, events and our staff networks through articles in the Diversity and Inclusion team newsletters. We shared relevant videos and we worked to raise awareness of our duty to make reasonable adjustments in the workplace, reporting harassment and discrimination and highlighting important dates in the equality calendar.

Carer Confident Employer and Carers Rights Day

The Council have become a Level 1 Carer Confident employer, accredited by [Employers For Carers](#).

To mark Carers Rights Day, the Carers Team held a virtual 'Carers Caffi' and were joined by Carers Wales. The team also organised a Carers Rights Day Celebration at Llantrisant Leisure Centre.

Earlier this year the Council launched its new Working Carers Guidance and introduced new leave arrangements for those with unpaid caring responsibilities.

For more information on being a Carer Confident Employer, or for any questions about being a Working Carer in the Council, please contact the Working Carers team on workingcarers@rctcbc.gov.uk.

LGBTQIA+ inclusion

Working with Cardiff Council we co-presented a series of internal events covering intersectional aspects of LGBTQIA+ issues including trans and faith with the Reverend Canon Sarah Jones of St Johns Church, Cardiff. The event was attended by 68 people across both Authorities.

Work also commenced on an LGBTQIA+ Education group for our educational psychology and youth support teams. Sharing best practice and current information on relevant subjects to allow them to support their service users.

Our work with [Proud Councils](#) continued. Proud Councils is a partnership of 9 Councils in the South East Wales region; Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr, Newport, RCT, Swansea, Torfaen and Powys. The group supported Pride events in Caerphilly, Merthyr, Newport, Powys and Pride Cymru in Cardiff. Our aim is to demonstrate a unified approach to LGBTQIA+ equality across the South East Wales Region. Proud Councils were delighted to have been a finalist for the Public Sector Equality Award in the Pink News Awards 2022. The award celebrated the exceptional parts of our country's governmental or other public bodies that are making change for the better.

Menopause Cafes

Virtual Menopause cafes have continued to provide a space to learn more about menopause and what it's like to experience it. The cafes provide a space to discuss menopause problems and symptoms, and tips and solutions to help manage these, such as nutrition and exercise.

Race Equality

In March 2022, Cabinet agreed to the Council signing the BITC's Race at Work Charter. This demonstrates the Council's commitment to improving equality of opportunity in the workplace. We have continued to work with BITC, who undertook a listening circle with some of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Staff. The findings of this will inform our future strategies.

To mark Black History Month, guest speaker Marilyn Bryan-Jones discussed 'The Welsh perspective,' and examined the history of Black people in Wales, Black History in the workplace and the education around Black History.

Senior Diversity Champions

Our Senior Diversity Champions have continued to champion the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda. They are:

Paul Mee Chief Executive	Race Equality
Dave Powell Director of Corporate Estates	Disability Inclusion
Gaynor Davies Director of Education	Gender Equality
Simon Gale Director of Prosperity and Development	LGBTQIA+ Inclusion

Staff Networks

Our staff networks have continued to grow and develop, providing an instrumental role in providing peer support. Network meetings are still held online. All of our networks (Allies, Disability and Carers, Perthyn LGBTQIA+ staff and Spotlight our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic network) help promote and raise awareness of specific days to all staff to help create an inclusive culture in the workplace.

White Ribbon

In November we were delighted to partner with local organisations within Cwm Taf for this year's White Ribbon vigil, which seeks to end male violence against women.

During the event we had guest speakers talking about supporting 'Ending violence against women and girls.' Those who attended also had the opportunity to sign the 'White Ribbon' pledge to 'never stay quiet about male violence against women.' You can find more information about [White Ribbon Day online](#) and how you can support.

We also had members from the Council's Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS) who supported the event with a very powerful poem reading.

Wales Interpretation and Translation Service

The Council is a partner in the Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) and has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for delivery of the service provided via the City of Cardiff Council. During 2022-2023 there were 675 bookings made through the service using 23 languages and BSL interpreters.

The 5 most requested languages during 2022-2023 were Urdu, Mandarin, Cantonese, Arabic and Bengali and Kurdish Sorani as joint 5th.

Overall Progress

As we conclude work on our 2019-2022 Strategic Equality Plan, we have demonstrated that significant progress has been made in the majority of the equality objectives. As a consequence of the pandemic, much positive and innovative work has been done to improve the accessibility and inclusion of the services we provide across the borough. This positive change will continue to be embedded within our service delivery.

Our work to deliver equality objectives contained in our Strategic Equality Plan helps us to demonstrate how we are contributing to a more equal Wales - 'a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances'. It also seeks to support all the well-being goals including a Wales of Cohesive Communities and a Prosperous Wales.

7. Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's)

The Council has had an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process in place for a number of years which is carried out under the following circumstances:

- Where new policies or practices are developed (including corporate plans, annual business plans and the annual budget);
- Where changes to existing policies or practices are proposed, and when conducting expenditure reviews and programme evaluations;
- Where there are proposals to withdraw from or discontinue an existing policy or practice;
- Where the business planning process has identified relevance to or implications for equality.

The process is regularly reviewed and takes into account the protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010.

The table below includes a snapshot of EIA's carried out in financial year 2022-2023.

Equality Impact Assessments

Think Climate RCT – The Council's Tackling Climate Change strategy 2022-2025	June 2022
Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (Formerly 21st Century Schools) – Proposal to Amalgamate Cefn and Craig Yr Hesg Primary Schools to Create a New Community Primary School	June 2022
Community Wardens	June 2022
Pontypridd Town Centre Placemaking Plan – Public Consultation Feedback and Project Updates	June 2022
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council – Draft Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-2026	July 2022
Redevelopment Proposal: Former Bronllwyn Residential Care Home	July 2022
Sustainable Communities for Learning (Formerly 21st Century Schools): Mutual Investment Model – Project 2	July 2022
A Report Proposing the Introduction of a New Solar Panel Grant and the Extension of the Domestic Heating Grant	September 2022
Medium Term Financial Plan 2022-2023 to 2025-2026	September 2022
The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf 2022-2027	October 2022
A Report on the Council's Local Housing Market Assessment 2022-2037	October 2022
New Empty Homes Strategy for 2022-2025	October 2022
Council Tax Premiums – Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes	December 2022
Waste Services – Revised Waste Management Strategy	January 2023
Service Review of the Community Meals Service	January 2023
Council Run Nursery Provision – Revised Service Delivery Arrangements	January 2023
Council Fees and Charges Proposals 2023-2024	January 2023

The Council's 2023-2024 Revenue Budget	February 2023
The Council's 3 Year Capital Programme 2023-24 to 2025-26	February 2023

Full details of decisions are included in Cabinet reports which are available on the following link:

<https://rctcbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1&LLL=0>

8. Employment Monitoring Data

The Council must collect and publish on an annual basis the number of:

- people employed by the authority on 31 March each year by protected characteristic;
- men and women employed, broken down by:
 - job;
 - grade (where grading system in place);
 - pay;
 - contract type (including permanent and fixed term contracts);
 - working pattern (including full-time, part-time and other flexible working patterns).
- people who have applied for jobs with the authority over the last year;
- employees who have applied to change position within the authority; identifying how many were successful in their application and how many were not;
- employees who have applied for training and how many succeeded in their application;
- employees who completed training;
- employees involved in grievance procedures either as a complainant or as a person against whom a complaint was made;
- employees subject to disciplinary procedures;
- employees who have left an authority's employment.

All of the information above must be presented for each of the separate protected groups. The exception to this requirement is the data on job, grade, pay, contract type and working pattern, which must be broken down only in relation to women and men.

This information is attached at Appendix 1 - Employment Monitoring Data.

9. Procurement

The Council operates the SPD (Single Procurement Document) which is part of the [National Procurement Website](#).

The SPD is a standard form, which replaces pre-qualification questionnaires, and should make the process of bidding for a public contract easier and contains a set of core questions commonly asked at the selection stage.

The SPD delivers a number of benefits:

- Increased efficiency for both suppliers and buyers, by allowing standard questions and keeping the number of questions to a minimum, and also by encouraging buyers to only seek information from suppliers if they can be clear about exactly how the information will be used;
- Greater standardisation of the selection stage, whilst also allowing for tailoring of questions to meet the specific requirements of the procurement;
- Increased transparency of the selection process and how responses will be evaluated – so that suppliers are able to work out easily whether or not they wish to bid for a particular opportunity, how to optimise their proposal and how to present it in an effective way;
- Improved opportunities for small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) and local businesses to compete on a more equal footing as a result of a carefully considered question set that removes some of the barriers to entry for them.

It includes a section on equal opportunities and is in line with the guidance on procurement published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission at <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/wales/>

10. Accessible Information

The Council produces information in a wide variety of formats according to need. Service areas record requests for alternative formats from service users to ensure that these are provided.

Accessibility Guidelines are available to employees on the Council's Intranet, these provide information on the types of accessible information available, what it is and does and includes a list of suppliers so that employees can source requested formats.

The Council has adopted the RNIB Clear Print Guidelines to increase readability of its documents.

11. Future Work

As we have come to the end of the current SEP, our future work will focus on developing our next SEP and embedding existing good practice. We will seek to undertake relevant engagement and gather evidence to develop our new equality objectives.

12. Contact Details

Rhondda Cynon Taf welcomes comments on all aspects of this report, both in what it contains and what it may not make clear enough about the work and progress in delivering equality and removing discrimination.

If you have any comments or want to know more about the work the Council is doing please contact:

Melanie Warburton
Diversity and Inclusion Manager
Rhondda Cynon Taf Council
Ty Elai
Dinas Isaf East Industrial Estate
Williamstown
Tonypandy
CF40 1NY

Telephone: 01443 444531

email: equality@rctcbc.gov.uk

Employment Monitoring Data

Equality monitoring information is stored against all employees' records in the Council's payroll and human resources information system (Vision). The information is requested at the recruitment stage and entered on to their record at that point.

The Council encourages all employees to provide this information and an equality monitoring survey is carried out on all employees every two years in an attempt to increase the information held.

In preparation for the extended employee monitoring requirements being introduced as part of the Equality Act 2010, the Council carried out an equality monitoring survey of all employees in 2011. This survey included questions that covered all protected characteristics except pregnancy. This question was not asked as it was felt that information on pregnancy and maternity would already be held on employee records and the time period allowed for return could mean that the information provided would be out of date.

The Diversity and Inclusion Team worked with other service areas to identify other useful information which resulted in the questionnaire including sections on the use of British Sign Language, Welsh language ability and whether or not an employee had caring responsibilities. This information was provided statistically to the service areas to inform their work and strategies.

Statistical analysis of the information is contained in the following tables and covers all Council employees including teachers and school based employees.

People Employed by Protected Characteristic

The following information has been provided using employees' national insurance numbers; this ensures that where an employee may work in more than one job their details will be included only once to avoid duplication of information. It includes teachers and school based employees. Some comparisons will be made to the local demographic of the borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf as over 80% of employees live in the Council area.

EQUALITY MONITORING DATA FOR THE YEAR 2022-2023

Gender

The table below shows the gender breakdown of employees:

Gender	Total	% of Workforce
Male	2764	25.5%
Female	8065	74.5%
Total	10829	

This table clearly indicates that women make up the majority of the Council workforce, this has been consistent for a number of years.

Age

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by age group:

Age Group	Total	% of Workforce
16-24	617	5.7%
25-34	1954	18.0%
35-44	2584	23.9%
45-54	2938	27.1%
55-64	2325	21.5%
65+	411	3.8%
Total	10829	

This table indicates, as the figures did last year, that over half of Council employees are within the age range of 35-54.

Disability

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by disabled and non disabled:

Identification	Total	% of Workforce
Disabled	270	2.5%
Non Disabled	9270	85.6%
Prefer not to say	15	0.1%
Information not held	1274	11.8%
Total	10829	

Information is held on almost 88% of employees. A small percentage of employees have indicated that they are disabled but this is unlikely to give the true picture of disability in the workplace.

National Identity and Ethnicity

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by ethnicity:

Ethnicity	Number
Asian	6
Asian Bangladeshi	1
Asian British	9
Asian Chinese	4
Asian Cornish	1
Asian Indian	3
Asian Other	5
Asian Pakistani	2
Black	1
Black African	15
Black British	2
Black Other	2
Black Welsh	1
Chinese	4
Gypsy/Romany/Irish Traveller	1
Mixed Other	13
Mixed White & African	3
Mixed White & Asian	9
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	12
Other Ethnic Group	29
Prefer Not To Say	19
White	3961
White - British	2792
White - Cornish	2
White - English	68
White - Irish	11
White - Northern Irish	1
White - Other	15
White - Scottish	6
White - Welsh	2396
Not Known	1435
Total	10829

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by national identity:

National Identity	Number of Employees
African	2
American	1
Any other Asian background	2
Any other Mixed background	2
Any other White background	9
Australian	2
Bangladeshi	2
British	1871
British Virgin Islands	1
Burundi	1
Canadian	1
Chinese	4
Chinese/Tibetan	3
Croatian	1
Dutch	1
English	211
European	11
German	1
Greek	2
Indian	5
Irish	18
Nigeria	3
Northern Ireland	1
Norwegian	1
Other	4
Polish	8
Portuguese	2
Romanian	3
Scottish	21
Spanish	3
Sri Lankan	2
Thai	1
Ukrainian	2
Welsh	5157
White and Asian	3
White and Black Caribbean	1
Not Known	3466
Total	10829

Information is held on 68% of employees with the majority of employees identifying themselves as Welsh followed by British.

Religion or Belief

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by religion or belief:

Religion	Total
Christian	2853
Muslim	17
Hindu	6
Buddhist	14
Sikh	1
Catholic	1
Other	98
% of workforce identifying with a religion	27.6%
No Religion	3661
Prefer not to say	417
Information not held	3761
Total	10829

Information is held on 65% of employees.

Sexual Orientation

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by sexual orientation:

Sexual Orientation	Total
Heterosexual	4624
Gay Man	57
Gay Woman/Lesbian	51
Bisexual	49
% of workforce identifying a sexual orientation	44.1%
Prefer not to say	276
Information not held	5772
Total	10829

Information is held on 47% of employees.

Pregnancy and Maternity

As at 31 March 2023 there were 139 employees on maternity leave. During the year 2022-2023, 293 employees had been on maternity leave during this period of time.

Gender Reassignment

Specific information has not been published due to the possibility of identification. The Council has a Gender Reassignment Policy in place which was developed some years ago as a result of an employee asking for support. Since that time the policy has been accessed and support provided as and when required by employees.

Regulation Nine - Gender Specific Information

Regulation Nine of the Specific Equality Duties in Wales requires the following specific information to be provided in respect of gender breakdown.

The number of employees employed at 31 March 2023 broken down by:

- Job
- Grade
- Pay
- Contract type
- Working pattern.

This information has been provided on the basis of actual job numbers so that those employees who work in more than one job are included in all the jobs they are employed in so the numbers may be different to those in the previous section. Once again the information includes teachers and school based employees.

The following table/s provides the specific information required:

Breakdown of Employees by Gender and Job

There are over a thousand job titles within the Council so for ease of demonstration they have been broken down into job families within the competency framework.

Job Family	Female	Male	Grand Total
Administrator	951	265	1216
Ancillary	1263	492	1755
Assistant Headteacher	41	31	72
Community and Social Care	1258	236	1494
Deputy Headteacher	81	38	119
Frontline and Customer Care	383	270	653
Headteacher	99	48	147
Middle Manager	192	95	287
School Support	1668	103	1771
Skilled Manual Worker	46	109	155
Strategic Manager	37	41	78
Supervisor	126	194	320
Teacher	1329	394	1723
Technical, Specialist & Professional	550	433	983
Unqualified Teacher	41	15	56
Total	8065	2764	10829

As last year, the data provides very few surprises with the majority of women working in 'traditional' female areas, particularly in the Community & Social Care, Ancillary and School Support settings; this will be more closely examined as part of the Gender Pay Objective within the Strategic Equality Plan.

Breakdown of Employees by Gender & Grade

The Council operated the following grading systems as at 31 March 2023.

- Chief Officers (Head of Service and above)
- National Joint Council for Local Government Services
- Soulbury (including Heads of Service)
- Teachers/Education

The tables below set out the breakdown of employees by gender and grade:

Employees by Gender & Grade – Chief Officers

Grade	Female	Male	Total
Chief Executive	0	1	1
Deputy Chief Executive & Group Director	0	1	1
Director Level 1	2	5	7
Director Level 2	1	1	2
Service Director Level 1	1	2	3
Service Director Level 2	3	9	12
Head of Service – Soulbury	4	2	6
Head of Service Level 1	10	7	17
Head of Service Level 2	11	9	20
Total	32	37	69

There has been no significant change since the previous year, whereby the majority of Chief Officer posts are held by males. Those held by females are largely on the lower end of the Chief Officer grades.

Employees by Gender and Grade – National Joint Council

Grade	Female	Male	Total
GR1	245	69	314
GR2	752	56	808
GR3	444	124	568
GR4	694	212	906
GR5	836	399	1235
GR6	1181	271	1452
GR7	679	229	908
GR8	342	152	494
GR9	245	129	374
GR10	277	184	461
GR11	191	104	295
GR12	178	73	251
GR13	135	71	206
GR14	61	15	76
GR15	37	38	75
GR16	2	0	2
GR17	15	2	17
GR18	0	0	0
Total	6314	2128	8442

Employees by Gender and Grade – Teachers/Education

Grade	Female	Male	Total
Education Psychologists and Advisers	102	32	134
Leadership Group/Headteachers	98	45	143
Deputy & Assistant Headteachers	127	72	199
Teachers	1353	400	1753
Total	1680	549	2229

The figures above indicate that females make up 75% of the education profession.

Individual salary grades of Education is complex to summarise but on analysis there is a fairly even split of male/female across all salary points with no obvious discrepancies in respect of ability to move through the grades. The grades and salary points are based on nationally agreed pay scales and there are specific requirements for each grade and how employees move through them.

Employees by Contract Type/Working Pattern

Contract Type	Female	Male	Total
Permanent Full Time	2622	1864	4486
Permanent Full Time Term Time	144	21	165
Permanent Part Time	1391	211	1602
Permanent Part Time Term Time	2155	95	2250
Temporary Full Time	445	219	664
Temporary Full Time Term Time	12	1	13
Temporary Part Time	100	48	148
Temporary Part Time Term Time	573	69	642
Casual	623	236	859
Grand Total	8065	2764	10829

For permanent members of staff the breakdown of female/male is comparable to the overall workforce. Although 74.5% of the overall workforce is female, a much higher percentage of those females compared to males are working on part-time or term-time only basis.

Applicants for Employment and Promotion

There were a total of 426 vacancies advertised during the year 2022-2023. The following table indicates the results of the recruitment monitoring for the same period.

Applicants for Employment and Promotion by Protected Characteristic

	Applicants	Shortlisted	Appointed
Disabled	320	164	32
Female	3163	1608	469
LGB	457	160	50
Male	1534	783	186
Minority Ethnic	335	149	17
Non Binary	7	2	1
Prefer not to say	20	11	4
Transgender	4	3	0

Leaving Employment

Information gained from the iTrent System shows that a total of 1324 employees left the employment of the Council in 2022-2023, which included 6 employees who were made redundant. It should be noted that these employees were school based, where the decision on redundancy rests with the relevant school in accordance with School Governance Regulations. The tables below indicate the number of leavers and reasons for leaving during 2022-23.

Reasons for Leaving by Gender

Reason for Leaving	Female	Male	Total
Age Retirement	67	26	93
Death in Service	7	2	9
Dismissed	3	2	5
Early Retirement (Teachers)	3	1	4
End of Contract	191	77	268
Failed Probationary Period	6	1	7
Ill Health	23	2	25
Inability to Attend Work	0	1	1
Mutual Agreement	92	26	118
Redundant	6	0	6
Transfer to another Council	38	14	52
Voluntary	515	153	668
Voluntary early retirement and redundancy	39	5	44
Voluntary redundancy	17	7	24
Total	1007	317	1324

Reason for Leaving by Age

Reason for leaving	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Total
Age Retirement	0	0	0	0	30	63	93
Death in Service	0	0	4	1	3	1	9
Dismissed	1	0	0	3	1	0	5
Early retirement (Teachers)	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
End of Contract	45	91	53	32	37	10	268
Failed probationary period	3	3	1	0	0	0	7
Ill health	0	0	0	1	19	5	25
Inability to Attend Work	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Mutual agreement	0	9	9	20	58	22	118
Redundant	0	1	1	1	3	0	6
Transfer to another Council	2	18	21	11	0	0	52
Voluntary	76	202	170	126	80	14	668
VER + Redundancy	0	0	0	0	34	10	44
Voluntary Redundancy	0	7	4	3	7	3	24
Total	127	331	263	198	277	128	1324

Reason for Leaving by Disability

Reason for Leaving	Total
Age Retirement	5
End of Contract	14
Ill Health	1
Mutual Agreement	6
Voluntary	15
VER + Redundancy	4
Voluntary Redundancy	1
Total	46

Reason for Leaving by Ethnicity

Reason	White	Ethnic Minority	Not Known	Total
Age retirement	85	1	7	93
Death in service	9	0	0	9
Dismissed	5	0	0	5
Early retirement (Teachers)	3	0	1	4
End of contract	204	7	57	268
Failed probationary period	4	0	3	7
Ill health	24	0	1	25
Inability to Attend Work	0	0	1	1
Mutual agreement	102	0	16	118
Redundant	5	0	1	6
Transfer to another Council	39	0	13	52
Voluntary	562	9	97	668
VER + Redundancy	43	0	1	44
Voluntary Redundancy	21	1	2	24
Total	1106	18	200	1324

Reason for Leaving by Religion or Belief

Reason	Christian	Hindu	Muslim	No Religion	Other	Prefer not to say	Sikh	Not Known	Total
Age Retirement	38	0	0	14	2	2	0	37	93
Death in Service	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	7	9
Dismissed	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	5
Early retirement (teachers)	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4
End of contract	67	2	3	112	3	19	0	62	268
Failed probationary period	0	0	0	4	0	3	0	0	7
Ill health	6	0	0	4	2	2	0	11	25
Inability to Attend Work	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Mutual agreement	31	0	0	19	1	2	0	65	118
Redundant	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	6
Transfer to another Council	16	0	0	15	0	1	0	20	52
Voluntary	159	0	1	264	2	41	1	200	668
VER + Redundancy	17	0	0	14	0	0	0	13	44
Voluntary Redundancy	7	0	0	8	0	0	0	9	24
Total	345	2	4	457	10	72	1	433	1324

Reason for Leaving by Sexual Orientation

Reason	Hetero- sexual	Gay/ Lesbian	Bi- sexual	Prefer not to say	Not Known	Total
Age retirement	45	0	0	2	46	93
Death in service	0	0	0	1	8	9
Dismissed	1	0	0	1	3	5
Early retirement (Teachers)	2	0	0	0	2	4
End of contract	139	3	5	15	106	268
Failed probationary period	4	0	0	3	0	7
Ill health	8	0	0	2	15	25
Inability to Attend Work	0	0	0	0	1	1
Mutual agreement	40	0	0	1	77	118
Redundant	2	0	0	0	4	6
Transfer to another Council	20	1	0	3	28	52
Voluntary	261	8	7	26	366	668
VER + Redundancy	29	0	0	0	15	44
Voluntary Redundancy	12	0	0	0	12	24
Total	563	12	12	54	683	1324

Training

Equality monitoring is carried out in respect of attendance at internal training courses only and has been undertaken by the use of equality monitoring forms that now monitor all protected characteristics.

Identification of the need for training, learning and development is carried out through the Council's workforce planning and performance review systems. During personal development interviews managers will discuss with employees their training, learning and development needs which are aligned to the performance review and job competencies. The results of these feed into a departmental training plan.

The Council does not currently monitor whether training requests are refused as the process used to identify training does not lend itself to this type of monitoring.

There were a total of 25 equality monitoring forms returned in 2022-2023. This is significantly less than previous years. Discussions took part with the Learning and

Development Team to ensure equality monitoring forms were distributed on training courses.

Training by Sex

Group	Female	Male	Prefer not to say	Total
Chief Executives	10	2	0	12
Community & Children's Services	6	2	0	8
Corporate & Frontline Services	0	4	0	4
Education & Inclusion	1	0	0	1
Total	17	8	0	25

Training by Gender Identity

Group	Non-binary	Trans	Other	Prefer not to say	None of these	Total
Chief Executives	1	0	0	0	11	12
Community & Children's Services	0	0	1	1	6	8
Corporate & Frontline Services	0	0	0	0	4	4
Education & Inclusion	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	2	0	1	1	21	25

Training by Age

Group	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Prefer not to say	Total
Chief Executives	0	5	1	6	0	0	0	0	12
Community & Children's Services	0	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	8
Corporate & Frontline Services	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	4
Education & Inclusion	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	0	8	7	8	2	0	0	0	25

Training by National Identity

Group	British	Cornish	English	Irish	Northern Irish	Scottish	Welsh	Other	Prefer not to say	Total
Chief Executives	2	0	1	0	0	0	8	1	0	12
Community & Children's Services	6	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	8
Corporate & Frontline Services	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	4
Education & Inclusion	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	11	0	2	0	0	0	11	1	0	25

Training by Ethnicity

Group	Arab	Asian	Black	Gypsy / Traveller (inc Sinti & Roma)	Mixed / Multiple	White	Other	Prefer not to say	Total
Chief Executives	0	1	0	0	0	11	0	0	12
Community & Children's Services	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	8
Corporate & Frontline Services	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	4
Education & Inclusion	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
Total	0	1	0	0	0	24	0	0	25

Training by Religion or Belief

Group	Buddhist	Christian	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Non-religious	Sikh	Other	Prefer not to say	Total
Chief Executives	0	6	0	0	1	2	0	1	2	12
Community & Children's Services	0	4	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	8
Corporate & Frontline Services	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	4
Education & Inclusion	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	0	11	0	0	1	10	0	1	2	25

Training by Pregnancy and Maternity

Group	Are currently pregnant or have been pregnant during last 12 months	Not currently pregnant, nor have been during last 12 months	Prefer not to say	Total
Chief Executives	1	11	0	12
Community & Children's Services	0	8	0	8
Corporate & Frontline Services	0	4	0	4
Education & Inclusion	0	1	0	1
Total	1	24	0	25

Training by Sexual Orientation

Group	Bisexual	Gay man	Gay woman / Lesbian	Heterosexual / Straight	Other	Prefer not to say	Total
Chief Executives	0	1	0	10	0	0	12
Community & Children's Services	0	0	0	8	0	0	8
Corporate & Frontline Services	0	0	0	2	0	0	4
Education & Inclusion	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	0	1	0	21	0	0	25

Disciplinary & Grievance

Disciplinary and Grievance cases are recorded and monitored through the Vision System. There were a total of 117 cases covering disciplinary, grievance and dignity at work and disciplinary action resulting from sickness absence in 2022/2023. The tables below provide equality monitoring information for these cases:

Gender

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Female	58	35	21	1	1
Male	59	36	20	2	1
Total	117	71	41	3	2

Age

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
16 – 24	3	3	0	0	0
25 – 34	18	9	8	1	0
35 – 44	28	14	14	0	0
45 – 54	41	29	11	1	0
55 – 64	24	13	8	1	2
65+	3	3	0	0	0
Total	117	71	41	3	2

Disability

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Disabled	7	3	3	1	0
Non Disabled	97	59	35	1	2
Information not held	13	9	3	1	0
Total	117	71	41	3	2

Ethnicity

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Asian	0	0	0	0	0
Black	3	3	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0
Mixed	0	0	0	0	0
White	102	60	37	3	2
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Information not held	12	8	4	0	0
Total	117	71	41	3	2

Religion or Belief

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
No Religion	48	27	20	1	0
Christian	22	16	5	1	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0

Prefer not to say	7	5	2	0	0
Information not held	40	23	14	1	2
Total	117	71	41	3	2

Sexual Orientation

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Heterosexual	53	34	18	1	0
Gay/Lesbian	2	1	1	0	0
Bisexual	1	1	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	6	4	2	0	0
Information not held	55	31	20	2	2
Total	117	71	41	3	2

Gender Reassignment & Pregnancy and Maternity

There was 0 employee in these categories involved in disciplinary, sickness absence or grievance cases.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 FEBRUARY 2024

DRAFT STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024-2028

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To pre-scrutinise the Council's draft Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) 2024-28 Equality Report

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that: -

- 2.1 Members undertake pre scrutiny on the report (attached at Appendix B), thus providing Scrutiny with an opportunity to contribute to this matter; and
- 2.2 Authorise the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications to provide feedback to Cabinet on behalf of Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The need for Cabinet to be aware of the comments and observations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee prior to their consideration of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 4.1 The SEP has been developed so that the Council can set out how it aims to meet its commitment to equality and how it will meet its legal obligations contained within the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.2 Members of the Overview & Scrutiny are being provided with the opportunity to undertake pre scrutiny on the SEP in advance of Cabinet's consideration and whether it agrees the publication of the SEP Members will recall the

identification of equality and diversity for greater scrutiny as part of scrutiny improvements identified in 2020.

- 4.3 In particular, Members may wish to consider whether the report has captured the relevant information required to satisfy its public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties).

5. PRE SCRUTINY

- 5.1 Members are reminded that the purpose of pre scrutiny activity is to influence the decisions before they are made. The Council's Overview & Scrutiny continues to have the opportunity to explore and comment on a number of reports in advance of Cabinet's consideration to bring a different perspective to the decisions made and enabling Cabinet decisions to be more informed.
- 5.2 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee has a further opportunity to undertake pre scrutiny of the SEP in advance of Cabinet approval for its publication

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Equality and diversity implications will be considered as part of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's feedback and comments and any subsequent implementation arrangements.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 The involvement of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in the pre-scrutiny exercise will contribute to the quality and robustness of Cabinet decision-making

8. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Financial and resource implications will be considered as part of any feedback and subsequent implementation arrangements.

9. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 9.1 Equality considerations feature throughout Corporate and National priorities and specifically the contents of the attached report contributes to a More Equal Wales and a Wales of Cohesive Communities.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The undertaking of pre scrutiny by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in respect of the Council's SEP strengthens accountability and assists Cabinet to

assess whether the plan meets its commitment to equality and how it will meet its legal obligations contained within the Equality Act 2010

- 10.2 Any comments and feedback to the Cabinet will ensure that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee fully evaluates the effectiveness of its overview and scrutiny function.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

as amended by

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS:

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DRAFT ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT

26 FEBRUARY 2024

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES &
COMMUNICATIONS**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

MARCH 2024

DRAFT STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024-2028

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES WITH RELEVANT
PORTFOLIO HOLDER CLLR MAUREEN WEBBER, DEPUTY LEADER**

Author(s): Melanie Warburton, Diversity and Inclusion Manager

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides information on the Council's Draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028. This plan highlights the equality objectives the Council will work towards over the next 4 years.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) is agreed and published.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The SEP has been developed so that the Council can set out how it aims to meet its commitment to equality and how it will meet its legal obligations contained within the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.2 Over the last year, internal engagement has taken place with a range of staff across the organisation. This engagement has highlighted that whilst many Council staff have a good experience in the workplace, others are not being afforded an inclusive workplace culture.
- 3.3 The Senior Leadership team have renewed their equality commitment and seek to embed this across the Council.
- 3.4 This internal evidence, along with other relevant data including Welsh Government ambitions outlined in their Anti-Racist Action Plan and LGBTQ+ Action plan have led to the development of the equality objectives.
- 3.5 This SEP has an inward focus, with the viewpoint of developing our staff to create inclusive environments, ensuring the community receive inclusive and

fair services and colleagues are valued and respected. To achieve this ambition the equality objectives are:

- We will embed equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into every aspect of our service delivery;
- We will attract applicants that represent the diversity of our communities, enriching our organisational capability to meet our ambitions;
- We will respect, value and listen to all our employees by embedding a culture of inclusion.

3.6 An action plan has been developed which will be embedded within the Council's Performance Management arrangements.

3.7 In addition to the above it is the intention, as part of the SEP action plan to establish an EDI Steering group to monitor overall progress of the SEP.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, known as the Wales Specific Equality Duties, require public bodies to publish equality objectives every 4 years. The equality objectives can be contained in a Strategic Equality Plan.

4.2 The aim of these duties is to enable better performance of the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

4.3 Whilst there is no statutory direction on what protected characteristics the SEP should cover, apart for the need for focus on Gender Pay, it is generally established that objectives should in some way cover all of the protected characteristics contained in the Equality Act 2010, which are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 The Council must satisfy its public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties, Councils must, in making decisions, have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations based on protected characteristics.
- 5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared and is attached in Appendix A (to follow). The Assessment will be published on the Council's website, in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010.
- 5.3 Due to the nature of the SEP all impacts are positive for all protected characteristics.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been prepared and is attached in Appendix B (to follow). This will be published on the Council's website together with a consultation document that outlines the proposal in further detail and in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.
- 6.2 There are no negative or adverse Welsh Language implications associated with this report.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 A 10 week public consultation ran from 12 December 2023 to 9 February 2024. The consultation report is shown in Appendix 1.
- 7.2 Overall, the majority of respondents agreed with the Council's objectives and approach. There were, however, varied opinions expressed in the free text section. Some supporting the Council's aspirations, others not supporting this area of work, and others making suggestions on areas that could be included.
- 7.3 As a result of consultation responses, additional narrative has been added to the SEP and action plan. These additions are highlighted in yellow. As the SEP is a high-level plan, it has not been possible to add all suggestions as some go into specific detail on particular themes e.g. unpaid carers, loneliness, dropped curbs. Though these suggestions will be re-examined and considered when developing specific areas of work within the action plan.
- 7.4 There were some comments around how the plan will be monitored going forward. This will be considered as part of the EDI Steering Group, which is to be established a result of the SEP.
- 7.5 Some respondents reflected that communication of the SEP action plan should be consistent across the Council. Communicating with all Council staff

can be problematic, therefore there is a Corporate focus to address this issue, with a view to improving internal communication.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Any financial implications arising from this report will be dealt with by individual service areas, e.g. staff replacement costs to attend relevant training sessions.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

The SEP has been developed to meet the requirements in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, known as the Wales Specific Equality Duties.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN, NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

- 10.1 The SEP compliments the Council's new Corporate Plan, in that equality, diversity and inclusion will be embedded across all service delivery plans.
- 10.2 Due regard has been made to all 7 well-being goals and the 5 ways of working, as contained within the [Wellbeing of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), which requires the Council to think about the long term impact of decisions on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

11. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

- 11.1 This applies to all electoral wards.

12. CONCLUSION

The Council's Strategic Equality Plan has been developed in line with legislative requirements and guidance produced by the Equality & Human Rights Commission.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee-
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer:
Melanie Warburton, Diversity and Inclusion Manager

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

A DISCUSSION PAPER FOR CABINET

MARCH 2024

Item: DRAFT STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024-2028

Background Papers

None

Officer to contact:

Melanie Warburton, Diversity and Inclusion Manager

DRAFT

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DRAFT – STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024 to 2028

ADD PICTURE

Contents:

1. Foreword
2. About our Strategy
3. About Rhondda Cynon Taf
4. Our Commitment to Equality
5. How we developed our objectives
6. Our Equality Objectives
7. How we will measure performance
8. Get in touch with us

Appendices:

- Action Plan
- Consultation Feedback
- Impact assessment

This document can be made available in alternative formats and languages. To make a request please telephone 01443 444529 or email equality@rctcbc.gov.uk

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh

1. Foreword

Welcome to Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's Strategic Equality Plan. This plan contains important information about the work the Council is doing to promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

EDI is an essential element of the Council's work. We recognise and value the benefits of a diverse workforce that works together to provide responsive and flexible services that take account of the different needs of people within our communities.

We believe we have a duty to tackle discrimination and disadvantage so that people feel safe from harassment, and everyone has access to high quality services.

The Council will use its leadership role to promote EDI and embed this within the delivery of our services. In developing this plan, we have engaged with our residents, our workforce, our partners and other stakeholders. Their opinions and experiences have helped us to shape the equality objectives it contains.

We have developed this plan following a period of tumultuous and challenging times. People within our communities were severely affected by Storm Dennis, the Covid-19 pandemic and aftermath of the pandemic, and we have seen an exacerbation of inequalities for many. Evidence shows that disabled people in Wales persistently face barriers to achieving a similar standard of living to non-disabled people; that discrimination and inequalities for Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority people exists in many areas of society; that female workers are more likely to be in low paid occupations and part-time jobs than male workers. These are just some of the instances of inequalities faced by many people. We all have a part to play in reducing these inequalities and preventing people from harm, and we are optimistic that the equality objectives contained in this plan will make a positive difference to the lives of people in our county.

We believe our workforce has an important role in eliminating discrimination and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. Therefore, this Strategic Equality Plan significantly focusses on developing and equipping our 10,000 plus employees with the awareness and behaviours needed to create an inclusive working environment. Doing this will enable us to provide equitable and inclusive services to the people of

the county. This is a challenge for us, we are operating in unprecedented times in respect of our budget situation and our resources are fewer than ever. Nonetheless, we are committed to EDI being central to our service delivery and for RCT to be a county where we can be proud to be inclusive to all.

ADD PHOTO

ADD PHOTO

Councillor Maureen Webber

Paul Mee

Deputy Leader

Chief Executive

2. About our Strategy

Purpose:

Our Strategic Equality Plan has been developed so that we can set out how we aim to meet our commitment to EDI and how we will meet legal obligations contained with the Equality Act 2010.

Within the Equality Act 2010, public bodies have an additional responsibility to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty. These are outlined below:

Public Sector Equality Duty

The General Duty

When making decisions and delivering services we must have due regard to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (protected characteristics are explained later in this report).
- Fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

When thinking about how to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't, we also need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and are connected to that characteristic.
- Meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

We also have to particularly think about how it will tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

The Specific Duties

The Equality Act provides a power to make regulations imposing duties on public bodies to support better performance of the general duty; these are known as the Specific Public Sector Equality Duties and are different in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Specific Duties underpin the General Duty and have been developed around four main principles:

- Use of evidence
- Consultation and Involvement
- Transparency
- Leadership.

The Welsh Government published regulations that introduced the Specific Duties for Wales in March 2011, these set out the actions the Council must take in order to comply and include the following areas:

- Setting Equality Objectives and publishing a Strategic Equality Plan
- Ensuring it engages with people who have an interest in how the Council's decisions affect them

- Collecting and publishing information relevant to compliance with the General Duty
- Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments and publishing the results if there is a substantial impact on the Councils identified
- Publish employment monitoring information annually
- Promote knowledge and understanding of the General Duty amongst its employees and use its performance assessment procedures to identify and address the training needs of its employees in relation to the General Duties
- Set a gender pay equality objective where a gender pay difference is identified
- Think about including conditions relevant to the General Duty in its procurement processes.

Who is protected under the Equality Act 2010?

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of their protected characteristic.

Here are the terms used in the Equality Act 2010 to identify the types of things that affect how people are treated and can mean people may experience discrimination.

The law is designed to protect them, they are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

This strategy is designed to build on the progress we've already made and ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded into everything we do.

Our progress to date:

We believe we have a positive record in delivering on EDI. Our [Annual Equality Reports](#) detail the areas where progress has been made. Some highlights are outlined below:

- We know more about the people we serve and are more responsive to their needs

We do this by collecting and analysing equality monitoring data and community insight data. We have developed an equality monitoring toolkit so our service areas have a consistent approach to equality monitoring and are more confident in collecting and using equality data.

- We have strengthened the scrutiny of the Equality Impact Assessment process

This ensures that timely and relevant evidence and data is used when making decisions that affect our service delivery to people in RCT.

- We have embedded the Socio-economic Duty into our strategic decision making processes

This allows services areas to reflect and evidence how the key decisions we make can improve outcomes for residents who may be more adversely affected by socio-economic disadvantage.

- We proactively recognise, celebrate and promote diversity

We are proud of our commitment in supporting inclusion. We've held many awareness sessions on EDI topics. We are committed to:

Armed Forces Covenant	Autism Aware
Disability Confident	Race at Work Charter
Stonewall Diversity Champions	Zero Racism Wales

Senior Diversity Champions and Staff Networks - Several members of the Senior Leadership Team are Diversity champions: Disability and Carers,

Gender, LGBTQIA+, Neurodiversity and Race. As champions, they promote diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation.

Staff Networks – we have 5 staff networks who provide a voice and peer support for our employees.

Youth Engagement – have hosted a number of youth events to promote EDI.

Anti Racism – our Education and Inclusion team have launched and shared a number of anti-racism resources for Schools.

Gender Pay – we delivered a Women in Leadership programme.

Carers – we launched our Working Carers Guide.

Women - we launched our Menopause Guide and have annually held International Women's Day events.

- Supported Employment Opportunities

Pathways to employment – we offer a number of schemes such as Care 2 Work, Step in the Right Direction, Gateway to Employment and the Green Light programme (year 11 pupils). These provide supported and inclusive working environments to young people who are facing challenges in life.

Vision Products – provides meaningful support, training and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the local community.

- Diversity in Democracy

We have improved accessibility for our elected members in a number of ways. We have refurbished our Council Chamber making it fully accessible. We offer translation facilities, audio equipment within the Chamber, hybrid meeting opportunities and promote reasonable adjustments to elected members. We also promote inclusion to prevent any perceived barriers for any future candidates.

- Improved accessibility of Council services and buildings

Many of our service areas have undertaken Autism Aware and Dementia Friendly training. Changing Places facilities have been installed in 3 visitor attractions across the county.

3. About Rhondda Cynon Taf

Rhondda Cynon Taf is the 3rd largest Council area in Wales and is made up of communities with different needs and aspirations. Covering a wide geographical area it has a population of just over 237,000 people. Like much of Wales, we have a population that is growing older and an increase of people aged over 65, with 1 in 5 people in this age group. The majority of the county's population identify as White Welsh and British, though the ethnic minority population has slightly grown in recent years. Over half of the population have no religion, of the rest of the population, Christianity is the predominant religion.

1. Information relating to this section is taken from ONS Census 2021.

ADD VISUAL – MAP OF RCT

The Council is governed by 75 elected members and operates a Cabinet system. It has a Senior Leadership Team headed by the Chief Executive and attended by Senior Directors, and employs over 10,000 employees in a variety of service areas and roles based within the following groups:

- Chief Executive
- Community & Children's Services
- Education & Inclusion Services
- Finance Digital & Frontline Services.

We are a major employer in the area and over 80% of our employees live within RCT. Following the pandemic, many of our employees now work in different ways, with many traditional office workers working in a hybrid way - a mixture of working from an office and working from their homes.

Our workforce is made up of 74% female and 26% male employees. Reflecting societal trends, many of our female employees work in lower paid, part-time roles. This has an impact on our gender pay gap. The predominant ethnicity of our workforce is White Welsh, though we have ethnic minority employees working across all service areas. Unfortunately, we do not have reliable data on the disability status of our employees, but we know many of our employees have a disability as we routinely make reasonable adjustments for many colleagues. We have LGBT employees working across all areas of the Council and we have an increasing number of employees who identify as non-binary. However, we have only recently started collecting equality data on gender identity so it will take some time to collect reliable data. Just over a quarter of our staff are in the age range of 45 to 54 years. This means we need to have workforce succession plans in place to ensure our service areas are sufficiently staffed in the future.

4. Our Commitment to Equality

The Senior Leadership Team have used this plan to outline the equality objectives that reinforce the Council's values and commitment to EDI. As such the Council will provide equality of opportunity for all, where all staff feel valued and can reach their full potential.

Our commitment:

- We recognise that to meet the needs of future generations of staff and communities we need to lead change and to be brave in what we can achieve.
- We will create a safe working environment where people are able to be who they really are, feel listened to, and are able to raise concerns, knowing we have their backs to do so.
- We will communicate the rationale for decisions so that people understand why actions have been taken and decisions made.
- We will take action to support the experience and career progression of under-represented groups and support everyone to understand the benefits of equity for all.

- We recognise that people's experiences across the organisation differ, and we will build a culture where everyone has a great experience.
- We will call out behaviour that harms or devalues people and there will be clear consequences for behaviour that falls below our organisation's standards.
- We commit to listening and seeking to understand the experiences of all. We will support and listen to staff to enable them to outline the culture they want to see.

5. How we developed our Equality Objectives

The Council's Vision is for a Rhondda Cynon Taf where:

People, communities, and business can grow and live in a healthy, 'green', safe, vibrant, and inclusive County Borough where they can achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives and work, both now and in the future.

To help us achieve this vision we have a number of ambitious strategies and objectives in place with the aim of reducing inequalities and improving the outcomes of people within our county. These strategies are delivered by our service areas. Some of the strategies are in partnership with external agencies such as Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board and South Wales Police.

We have robust performance monitoring arrangements in place to ensure we are delivering on what we say we are going to do. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on all of our strategies, ensuring we are mindful of how our decisions and the services we offer impact on the wide diversity of people in the county. Many of these strategies can be found here [\(hyperlink to Corporate plan when available\)](#)

As well as reflecting upon individual strategies, in developing this Strategic Equality Plan, we have aligned our equality objectives with our Corporate Plan 2024-2029 [\(hyperlink when available\)](#). The Corporate Plan outlines the Council's 4 wellbeing objectives:

1. **People and Communities** - Supporting and empowering RCT residents and communities to live safe, healthy, and fulfilling lives.
2. **Work and Business** - Helping to strengthen and grow RCT's economy.
3. **Nature and the Environment** - A green and clean RCT that improves and protects RCT's environment and nature.
4. **Culture and Heritage** - Recognising and celebrating RCT's past, present and future.

The Corporate Plan outlines the framework that will guide and shape what we do. It directs how and where we spend our budgets, manage, and mitigate strategic risks and inform how we train and develop our staff and Councillors to meet the current and future challenges. Challenges like:

- A growing and aging population, many of whom may experience poor health with complex care and support needs.
- The need to attract investment, high quality jobs and support the green economy whilst addressing the skills gap.
- The impact on lives and the risk to homes and businesses from extreme weather events.
- Tackling inequalities in health, education, work and improving life chances.
- Dealing with rising energy costs and energy security, higher prices because of the supply chain disruptions.

In developing the Corporate Plan we aligned with important regional documents such as the [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board Population Needs Assessment \(2022-2027\)](#) and [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Service Board Wellbeing Plan \(2023-2028\)](#). The findings and ambitions of both of these documents have been reflected in wellbeing objectives contained in our Corporate Plan ([hyperlink when available](#)).

Whilst it is important to align our equality objectives to our Corporate Plan, there are key external factors that have been important in developing our equality objectives. We wish to reflect the Welsh Government's ambitions outlined in their [Anti-Racist](#)

[Action Plan](#) and [LGBTQ+ Action Plan](#). We have considered information from the [Equality and Human Rights Monitor 2023: 'Is Wales Fairer?'](#), and from an Audit Wales report relating to [Equality Impact Assessments](#), as well as a report from the [Older People's Commissioner for Wales – Access Denied: Older people's experience of digital exclusion in Wales](#). As members of organisations such as the [Business Disability Forum](#), [Business In the Community](#), [Stonewall](#) and [Tai Pawb](#) it is important to reflect upon relevant evidence and research they publish.

We are mindful of forthcoming recommendations from the Welsh Government's [Disability Rights Taskforce](#), in particular on embedding and understanding the Social Model of Disability. When the Disability Rights Action Plan is released in 2024, we will incorporate it's recommendations into this plan's accompanying action plan.

To ensure our equality objectives are evidence based we have engaged with residents and our workforce through face-to-face meetings, focus groups, surveys, manager's briefings and on-line sessions as well as analysing community and workforce data. Having objectives that are evidenced based ensures that we not only reflect significant societal issues and trends but the regional issues that affect and matter to our residents and employees.

6. Our Equality Objectives

Objective 1

We will embed equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into every aspect of our service delivery.

Why we are doing this:

- We recognise, and are concerned about, the growing inequalities that face some people living and working in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Residents have told us that we need to improve the accessibility of our towns and county.
- Whilst some of our services areas have a good knowledge of their customers, others have told us they'd like support to be more responsive to the diversity of their customers.

- Feedback has told us that we need to engage in genuine and meaningful communication with residents.
- We need to foster respect and trust between different communities and generations.
- Whilst we already have good governance processes in respect of Equality Impact Assessments, we need to do more to ensure we monitor the progress on the things we said would do. In particular, tasks in respect of any mitigating actions identified.

What we will do:

1. Embed EDI into all of our strategic decision-making processes.
2. Establish a monitoring process for Equality Impact Assessments.
3. Incorporate actions contained within Welsh Government Action plans (Anti-Racism, LGBTQ+ and the forthcoming Disability Rights Action Plan) into service areas delivery plans.
4. Ensure EDI is regularly **monitored and discussed at** Senior Leadership team and Service Area Senior Management team meetings.
5. Ensure all Service Area Delivery plans have robust EDI actions that recognise the diverse nature of our communities.
6. Annually challenge service areas on their EDI record.
7. **Ensure our engagement with residents is continuous and inclusive and further developing relationships with diverse and underrepresented groups.**
8. **Ensure communication to residents is in accessible versions such as BSL, Easy Read and non-digital formats.**
9. **Collaborate with relevant organisations to better understand the needs of communities.**
10. Raise awareness of the benefits of undertaking equality monitoring.

How we measure:

- Monitor Equality Impact Assessments.
- Review Equality Monitoring data.

- Review EDI achievements in service area self-assessment process.
- Review engagement and consultation responses.
- Review equality monitoring data that is collected.

What will success look like:

That RCT residents, regardless of their background, culture or identity, feel listened to and represented in our decision-making processes.

Objective 2

We will attract applicants that represent the diversity of our communities, enriching our organisational capability to meet our ambitions.

Why we are doing this:

1. We have identified gaps in our workforce equality monitoring data. This does not provide us with an accurate picture of our workforce.
2. Analysis of workforce monitoring data shows that some groups of staff are not progressing as well as others in their careers.
3. Whilst we have narrowed our gender pay gap there is still work to do, but we also need to understand our disability and ethnicity pay gaps.
4. Analysis of our recruitment data indicates there may be barriers to some groups of people joining the organisation, particularly ethnic minority people and people with disabilities.
5. We need to continue to undertake actions that reduce our gender pay gap.

What we will do:

- Improve the uptake of completion of workforce equality monitoring data.
- Publish our pay gaps on Disability, Ethnicity and Gender.
- Improve the number of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority candidates applying for jobs.

- Review our existing Recruitment and Selection policy and practices with the intention of removing any bias.
- Actively promote the positive benefits of working for the Council. Whilst policies benefit all employees, some will have a particular benefit to women e.g. flexible working, support for carers, shared parental leave, menopause guide.
- Offer initiatives such as mentoring programmes that benefit under-represented groups of staff.

How we will measure:

- Monitor workforce equality monitoring data.
- Monitor the number of applicants for jobs by protected characteristic.
- Monitor the progression of people in the workforce, with particular focus on ethnic minorities, disability and women.
- Conduct pulse surveys to hear experiences of applicants through the recruitment process.

What will success look like:

- We attract diverse applicants for our jobs, and we have diverse teams across the Council which genuinely celebrate the value of difference.

Objective 3

We will respect, value and listen to all our employees by embedding a culture of inclusion.

Why are we doing this:

- Engagement with our employees has told us that not all staff are having a positive experience at work. We have heard about experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workplace. This is particularly apparent

for some ethnic minority colleagues and colleagues with disabilities. We have also heard about examples of sexism and ageism.

- Members of our staff networks told us their networks are important in providing peer support. In addition to this they want a greater role in driving inclusive culture change across the organisation.
- Evidence from [Welsh Government Anti Racist Wales action plan](#), [BITC - Race at Work Charter report](#) and [Race Alliance Wales – Deconstructing Unsafe Spaces](#) shows there is much organisations need to do to create race equality. Our ethnic minority staff told us that many white colleagues have little understanding of factors that may impact upon them. Issues such as microaggressions, lack of cultural awareness and racism.
- Some of our neurodiverse staff, as well as our managers, have told us that we need to do more to raise awareness about neurodiversity.
- The [BDF Great Big Workplace Adjustment Survey 2023](#) highlights that most participants felt the onus is on the disabled employee, rather than their employer, to initiate the process of reasonable adjustments. This is echoed by some of our employees. We've also heard about unnecessary delays for some employees in obtaining reasonable adjustments and the anxiety this can cause.
- Our managers have told us they need more awareness to have conversations around disability and reasonable adjustments, gender identity, neurodiversity and race.

What we will do:

1. We will take a Zero tolerance approach to bullying and harassment and improve our policy and mechanisms for reporting harassment.
2. We will roll out mandatory equality training for all staff on a range of EDI topics.
3. We will hold awareness raising sessions and reflective spaces for staff on a range of EDI topics.
4. We will support safe spaces for staff to share any concerns they may have in respect of EDI issues.
5. We will improve Cultural awareness across the organisation.

6. We will review our existing HR policies with the intention of removing bias.
7. We will review and improve the reasonable adjustment process to ensure it supports the staff that need it.
8. We will ensure our workforce development plan includes actions to reduce our gender pay gap.

How we will measure:

- Monitor reports of bullying and harassment.
- Monitor attendance of training.
- Monitor disciplinary action in relation to complaints of harassment and discrimination.
- Ask questions about inclusion in pulse and annual surveys.
- Develop mechanisms to monitor reasonable adjustments.

What will success look like:

- Our employees will feel valued, respected and safe in the workplace.

7. How we will measure performance

The actions within this plan (Appendix 1) will be delivered through Service Delivery plans. Service Delivery plans set out the key priorities for each service area to be delivered over 12-18 months.

In addition to assisting the service with monitoring progress against its priorities, the Delivery Plans also:

- support delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities
- demonstrate how the service is aligning with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act
- provide a framework to ensure the priorities arising from the Council's Corporate Assessment are addressed
- facilitate co-ordination of cross cutting strategies
- inform Personal Development Reviews

- enable Internal Audit to conduct its review of Risk Management arrangements as part of agreed work programme.

All Service Delivery Plans are monitored by the Group Director and Cabinet Member as part of the Council's performance management arrangements.

Self-Assessment

In addition to Service Delivery Plans we have a well-established and effective self-assessment process in place. The self-assessment process focuses on impact and outcomes of the services being delivered, it leads to improvements in the experiences and the outcomes for our customers.

At the heart of self-assessment are three questions:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know?
- How can we improve things further?

The process of self-assessment is continuous and an embedded part of the Council's working life.

Performance Report to Cabinet

Performance Reports are prepared every quarter. These reports enable Council officers and Councillors to monitor and scrutinise the progress of all Council priorities and services.

We regularly assess and review our progress in the delivery of actions set out in the Council's key plans and also the performance measures within the Council's Corporate Plan and Service Delivery Plans.

Publication of the Annual Equality Monitoring Report

The main purpose of an Annual Equality Monitoring Report is to fulfil the Council's legal duties and obligations to report on its progress in delivering the General and Specific Equality Duties which includes its progress in delivering the Equality Objectives.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that all public authorities covered under the specific duties in Wales should produce an Annual Equality Report by 31 March each year.

6. Get in touch with us

We welcome comments on all aspects of this report, both in what it contains and what it may not make clear enough about the work we intend to do.

If you have any comments or want to know more about the work the Council is doing please contact:

Melanie Warburton
Diversity and Inclusion Manager
Rhondda Cynon Taf Council

Telephone: 01443 444531

Email: equality@rctcbc.gov.uk

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Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028

Action Plan

Equality Objectives:

- 1. We will embed equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into every aspect of our service delivery.**
- 2. We will attract applicants that represent the diversity of our communities, enriching our organisational capability to meet our ambitions.**
- 3. We will respect, value and listen to our all our employees by embedding a culture of inclusion.**

Action	Delivery Date	Responsible Officer	Measurement	Protected Characteristic
Objective 1: We will embed equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into every aspect of our service delivery.				
Establish an EDI Steering Group to oversee the delivery and monitoring of the Strategic Equality Plan (Chaired by Deputy Leader)	September 24	Chief Executive	Bi annual updates to Senior Leadership Team	All
Incorporate WG Anti-Racist Action Plan into Service Delivery Plans	April 25	Heads of Service	Quarterly performance reports / Updates to EDI Steering Group	Race Religion
Incorporate WG LGBTQ+ Action Plan into Service Delivery Plans	April 25	Heads of Service	Quarterly Performance reports / Updates	Sexual Orientation Gender Reassignment

			EDI Steering Group	
Review and improve communication methods to residents ensuring accessible versions such as BSL, Easy Read and non-digital formats.	April 26	Service Director of Democratic Services/Service Director of Digital and ICT	Quarterly Performance Reports/Updates to EDI Steering Group	Age Disability Race
Establish a governance process monitoring Equality Impact Assessments actions	April 25	Service Director of Democratic Services	Quarterly Performance Reports	All
Monitor the inclusion of EDI actions Service Delivery Plans	April 25	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	Service Delivery Plans Self Assessment	All
Establish service area EDI working groups	April 25	Heads of Service	Feed into EDI Steering Group	All
Monitor engagement and consultation activity	April 25	Service Director of Democratic Services	Feed into EDI Steering Group	All
Monitoring the use of equality monitoring toolkit	April 25	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	Feed into EDI Steering Group	All
Action Objective 2: We will attract applicants that represent the diversity of our communities, enriching our organisational capability to meet our ambitions.	Delivery Date	Responsible Officer	Measurement	Protected Characteristic
Campaign to improve uptake of employees inputting their equality data into ITrent	April 26	Diversity and Inclusion Manager/Payroll Manager	Workforce Data	All
Review our Recruitment and Selection policy and processes to ensure we meet our commitment to DWP's Disability Confident Scheme.	April 26	Director of HR	Monitoring applicant, progressing	Disability

			throughout process	
Review our Recruitment and Selection policy – marketing, job description design on onboarding process to ensure they are free of bias and promote the benefits of working for the Council.	April 26	Director of HR	Monitoring numbers applying, progressing throughout process	All
Produce recruitment guidance for managers on avoiding bias in the recruitment process	April 26	Service Director of Organisational Development	Monitoring applicants progressing throughout process	All
Provide training to recruiting managers on potential bias in recruitment processes	April 28	Director of HR/Service Director of Organisational Development	Attendance on training	All
Provide meaningful job opportunities for young people through our Apprenticeship/Graduate/Care to Work programmes	April 26	Service Director of Organisational Development	Numbers on programmes	Age
Develop induction programmes that are inclusive, recognising different backgrounds and experiences.	April 26	Heads of Service/Service Director of Organisation Development	Numbers of programme Retention data	All
Offer coaching and mentoring initiatives for under-represented groups in the workforce	April 26	Service Director of Organisational Development	Numbers attending	Age Sex Race
Monitor career progression for staff by protected characteristic	April 26	Service Director of Organisational Development	Bi annual workforce data	All

Action Objective 3: We will respect, value and listen to our all our employees by embedding a culture of inclusion.	Delivery Date	Responsible Officer	Measurement	Protected Characteristic
Roll out a programme of mandatory training across the organisation covering all protected characteristics	April 26	Heads of Service/Diversity and Inclusion Manager	Number of staff completing training	All
Communicate a zero-tolerance approach to bullying harassment	September 24	Chief Executive	Number of reported cases Monitor Dignity at Work complaints and Disciplinary numbers relating to protected characteristics	Age Disability Gender Reassignment Race Religion Sex Sexual Orientation
Deliver monthly on-line EDI and reflective sessions for staff and managers	Ongoing	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	Number of staff attending sessions – monitored by EDI steering group	All
Launch a revised Multi Cultural awareness resource	April 25	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	Pulse surveys	Race Religion
Support staff networks and safe spaces for to enable peer support of under-represented groups of staff	April 25	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	Number of members of Staff Networks EDI Steering Group	All
Review reporting mechanisms for reporting identity based harassment	April 25	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	Annual Staff Survey Pulse Survey	Age Disability Gender Reassignment Race

			Staff Network feedback	Religion Sex Sexual Orientation
Undertake a review of Reasonable Adjustment scheme and supporting processes	April 26	Diversity and Inclusion Manager	Pulse survey	Disability
Review HR policies ensuring they are free of bias	April 26	Director of Human Resources/Head of Employee Relations	Monitoring by EDI Steering Group	All
Publish our Disability, Ethnicity and Gender Pay Gaps	April 26	Workforce Development Manager	Monitoring by EDI Steering Group	Disability Race Sex
Commitment to the actions BITC's Race at work Charter	April 26	Heads of Service/Diversity and Inclusion Manager	Workforce Data Pulse Survey	Race
Build reducing gender pay gap actions into the Workforce Development plan	April 25	Service Director of Organisational Development	EDI Steering Group	Sex Pregnancy and Maternity

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RCT



Consultation Report

Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC

February 2024

Let's Talk Equalities



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This section provides a summary of the main findings from the Let's Talk Equalities consultation carried out in 2023/ 2024.
- The consultation was conducted in-house and ran from 12th December 2023 to 9th February 2024.
- The purpose of the consultation was to gather the thoughts and opinions of stakeholders on Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's Draft Strategic Equality Plan, prepared in 2023.
- The following methods were used to consult with stakeholders (described more fully in Section 3, Methodology):
 - Online survey and "Ideas Board" via the Let's Talk Equalities website
 - Invitations to respond were sent to multiple stakeholders/ groups
 - Development of an Easy Read format document that was circulated
 - Attendance and engagement at multiple community and advocacy group meetings for direct feedback
 - Engagement via multiple staff events and groups
- 86 survey responses were received
- 5 ideas were posted to the online board
- Feedback was also received via email and through various engagement activities. These are available in a confidential appendix for officers.
- Over 400 people were engaged in this consultation

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the Let's Talk Equalities consultation 2023/2024.
- 1.2 Section 2 outlines some brief background to the consultation process.
- 1.3 Section 3 details the methodology.
- 1.4 Section 4 provides the results from the consultation activities carried out on the Let's Talk Equalities website.

Appendix 1 containing the full text of all comments received in the online consultation and Appendix 2 containing feedback via other routes can be viewed separately and is available for Cabinet and Officers to view.

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2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Our Strategic Equality Plan has been developed so that we can set out how we aim to meet our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and how we will meet legal obligations contained within the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.2 The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, known as the Wales Specific Equality Duties require public bodies to publish equality objectives every 4 years. The equality objectives can be contained a Strategic Equality Plan.
- 2.3 The aim of these duties is to enable better performance of the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 2.4 Whilst there is no statutory direction on the what protected characteristics the SEP should cover, apart for the need for focus on Gender Pay, it is generally established that objectives should in some way cover all of the protected characteristics contained in the Equality Action 2010, which are:
- age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation.
- 2.5 In advance of presenting to Cabinet, we wished to consult with stakeholders including staff, members of the public, advocacy and support groups and community groups for feedback on the Draft Strategic Equality Plan.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The Let's Talk Equalities project was conducted in-house and the consultation ran from the 12th December 2023 to 9th February 2024. This report presents the results from the project run on the Let's Talk website. This report will be presented to Cabinet and Officers to consider the feedback received.
- 3.2 The consultation approach used the [Let's Talk](#) online engagement platform, which provides a user friendly and interactive form of engagement. Engagement tools used in this consultation included a short survey (focused on the Equality Objectives set out in the Draft Strategic Equality Plan) and an online "Ideas Board" which allows respondents to post open suggestions for improvement and comment on ideas posted by others.
- 3.3 The online engagement was promoted in a number of ways and across a number of channels, including social media. Direct emails to stakeholders including Stonewall, Tai Pawb, Fighting for Pride, People First, Race Alliance Wales, Wales Council for the Deaf, Interlink, Cwm Taf Community Cohesion Group, Elected Members and Town & Community Councils were circulated with an invitation to feed back on the Draft Strategic Equalities Plan either directly or via the website. Posters advertising the consultation and the Draft SEP were displayed in community venues including YMa, Libraries, Leisure Centres etc.
- 3.4 Engagement with staff also included information via email (global internal email updates, all staff networks, YEPs Equality Group, BAME Education Group, schools, unions, front-line managers, Senior and Chief officers) and direct engagement through online Equality Clinic events. Posters were also displayed at staff sites including Occupational Health, Vision Produce and depots.
- 3.5 All posters and emails were presented in both Welsh and English, and there are both Welsh and English versions of Let's Talk (Dewch i Siarad) available.
- 3.6 Staff also lead direct engagement at a number of community meetings including Disability Forum, Valleys Veterans, Taff Ely Veterans, Innovate, Valley Ethnic Minority Support Group.

4 LET'S TALK EQUALITIES

- 4.1 The following section outlines the results from the main consultation activities carried out on the Let's Talk Equalities website.

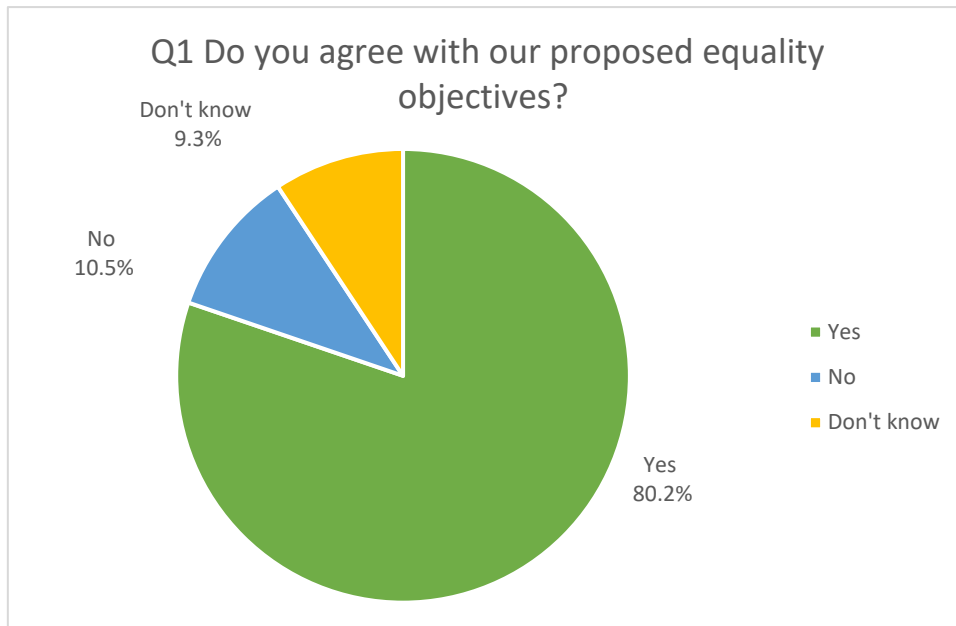
In total there were 498 visits to the Let's Talk Equalities page, of which 346 visitors were Aware (meaning the page was viewed), 213 were Informed (meaning they viewed multiple pages and/ or opened files, downloaded documents etc.) and 91 Engaged (meaning they took part in one of the engagement tools on the page). The majority of page traffic came via direct links.

- 4.2 There were two ways for page visitors to engage with the consultation. Firstly, the full survey, which posed three questions about the Equality Objectives set out in the Draft Strategic Equality Plan as well as an open comment question for any other suggestions. Secondly, an online "Ideas Board" which allowed respondents to post suggestions and comment on suggestions made by others. The survey could be filled in without any registration, but the Ideas Board required at least an email address to be able to post – email addresses are not made public, however.

Survey Results

- 4.3 Respondents were asked to read the Equality Objectives set out in the Draft SEP before completing the survey. A total of 86 completed surveys were received. For the purposes of this report, any blank responses to individual questions have been discounted. Therefore, all percentages quoted are a percentage of the total responses for that individual question.
- 4.4 **Question 1: Do you agree with our proposed equality objectives?**

80.2% of respondents (69) stated that they agree with the proposed objectives. 10.5% (9) stated that they did not agree, and 9.3% (8) stated that they did not know whether they agreed or not.



Q1 Do you agree with our proposed equality objectives?	Count	%
Yes	69	80.2%
No	9	10.5%
Don't know	8	9.3%
Text responses	8	

Figure 1: Q1 Do you agree with our proposed equality objectives?

- 4.5 Respondents who selected “No” were asked to explain why. 8 comments were received, expressing views including a perceived unfair bias in favour of people with protected characteristics, concerns that experience and qualifications are overlooked in favour of demographic considerations and a lack of consideration in the objectives for unpaid carers.

Quotes include:

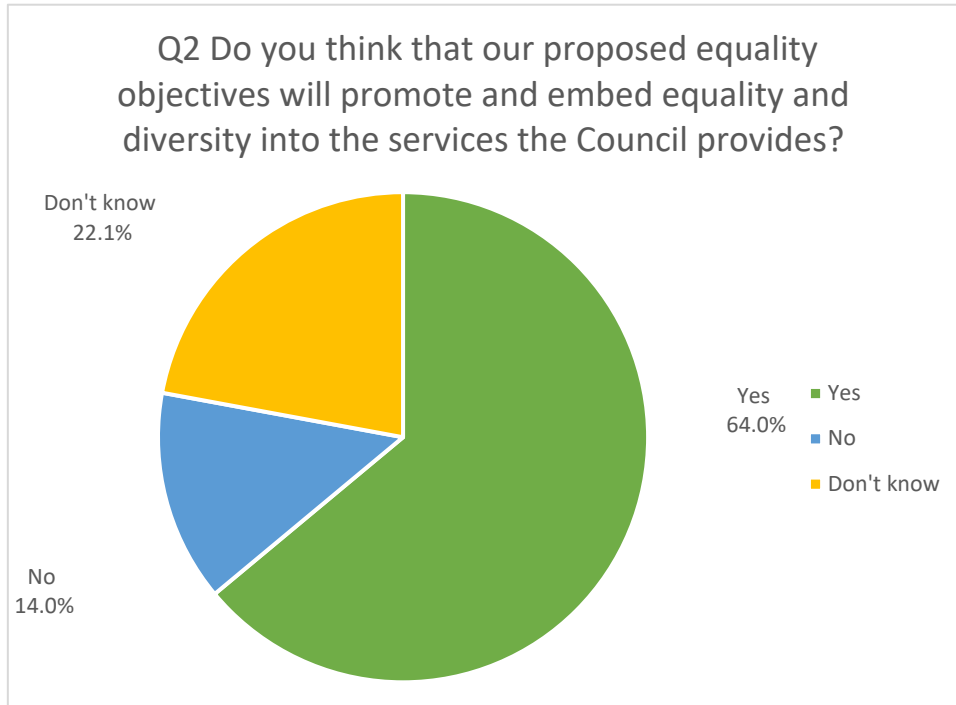
Everybody should be treated the same, treating some groups differently for whatever reason is unfair

I am disappointed that unpaid carers, including our working staff who are unpaid carers, are not mentioned or referenced in any of the objectives.

The council needs to focus on providing basic services cost efficiently not playing identity politics which serve to divide the public.

- 4.6 **Question 2: Do you think that our proposed equality objectives will promote and embed equality and diversity into the services the Council provides?**

64% of respondents (55) stated that they believe the proposed objectives will promote and embed equality and diversity into Council services. 14% of respondents (12) stated that they do not believe this to be the case and 22.1% (19) stated that they did not know either way.



Q2 Do you think that our proposed equality objectives will promote and embed equality and diversity into the services the Council provides?	Count	%
Yes	55	64.0%
No	12	14.0%
Don't know	19	22.1%
<i>Text responses</i>	11	

Figure 2: Q2 Do you think that our proposed equality objectives will promote and embed equality and diversity into the services the Council provides?

4.7 Respondents who selected “No” were asked to explain why. 11 responses were received, many of which repeat the concerns from the previous question. Additionally, some comments raise concerns about the practical implementation of the stated objectives during times of financial and resource constraints, and other comments listed personal experiences that respondents felt the objectives will not address.

Quotes include:

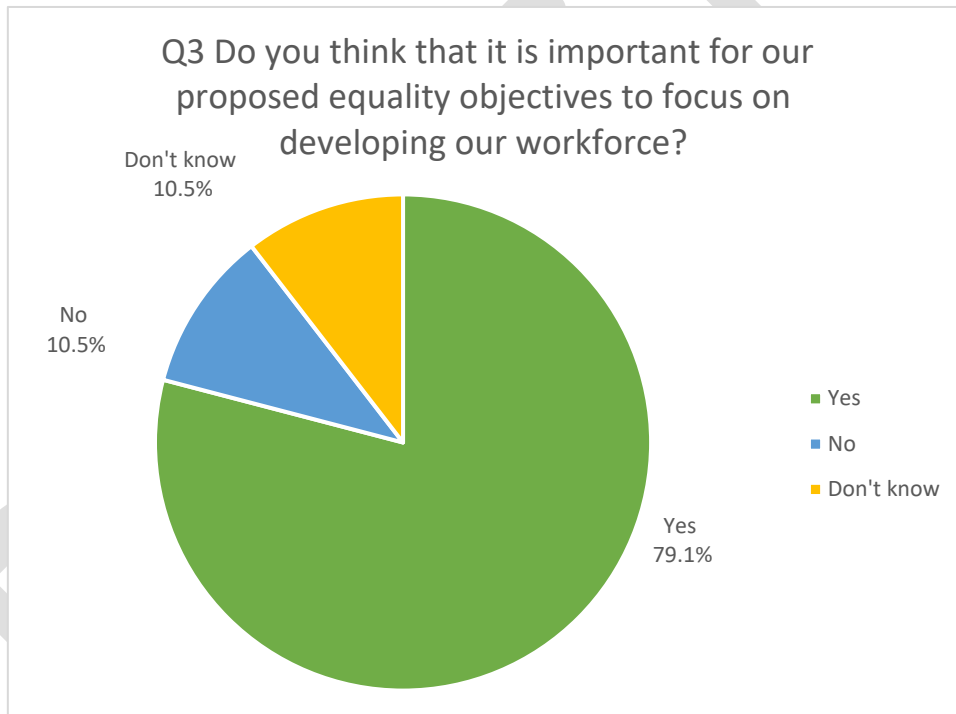
RCT has failed in recent times for certain demographics of people who were linked within the council. In 2023 alone, they resulted in RCT Pride disbanding due to the Pontypridd Pride event being cancelled

There is little capacity to prioritise this in addition to other requirements placed on managers already

It needs to be something everyone believes in and part of. Not all staff will get to see or feel part of this until someone take the time to devolve the information to all staff.

4.8 Question 3: Do you think that it is important for our proposed equality objectives to focus on developing our workforce?

79.1% of respondents (68) stated agreement that it is important for the proposed objectives to focus on workforce development. Equal numbers (9, or 10.5%) stated disagreement or that they did not know.



Q3 Do you think that it is important for our proposed equality objectives to focus on developing our workforce?	Count	%
Yes	68	79.1%
No	9	10.5%
Don't know	9	10.5%
Text responses	8	

Figure 3: Q3 Do you think that it is important for our proposed equality objectives to focus on developing our workforce?

4.9 Respondents who selected “No” were asked to explain why. 8 comments were received, with themes including the view that there should be more focus on communities, that experience and long service should be rewarded with progression and that money spent on this work could be used elsewhere.

Quotes include:

This work is costing money and during a period in our lives when the council is cutting services to save money, this is zero priority.

There is no room for advancement through experience/time spent in the job.

The workforce would develop naturally if more work was done in communities (given most of the workforce lives IN THOSE COMMUNITIES)

4.10 **Question 4: Do you have any other comments about the proposed Strategic Equality Plan?**

Respondents were asked to provide any further comments they would like to make. A total of 38 comments were received for this question, and as well as building upon the themes already raised previously these comments included:

Support for the proposals

Overall, the plan feels thought out, evidence-based and seems to have strong rationale

Nothing to add, I feel that the STP is well written and sets out clear achievable objectives.

Satisfying the public and workforce needs, Really important and a great plan

Concerns about vague commitments

it sounds a bit vague and I'm not sure I can support it fully without real targets and promises

It is very wishy-washy

It doesn't say what you are going to do

Questions and comments regarding implementation

It would be great to also have some additional manager guidance on recruiting from a diversity perspective, for example in terms of recruitment advertising

I feel in order to create inclusive and supportive workplaces this plan needs to cover elements of equality and diversity that aren't strictly speaking covered by legislation, such as unpaid caring responsibilities.

The Strategic Equality Plan needs to be shared across the whole of the council and not just the office based workforce. The staff not based in offices feel they have no voice in some aspects of what the council do or are providing.

Other criticisms

Seems a little to involved and timely both to set up so far and looking at the requiremntns going forward, when we could focus on our work

Just stop. It's good to be different but don't make that the main driving force in everything.

There is too much reporting on meeting targets or complying with needless legislation.

A number of comments also raised specific examples and personal stories related to EDI, or provided specific technical commentary on aspects of the Draft SEP or Equality Objectives. These, and all comments received in this survey, are available in a separate appendix for officers to read.

Ideas Board

- 4.11 A total of 5 ideas were posted to the online board, from 4 users. There was 1 comment made in response.

Share your ideas

about 2 months ago

Do you have any ideas that would help us reduce inequalities in the workplace and in our communities?

The Ideas Board consists of six cards arranged in a 2x3 grid. The first card is a placeholder with a lightbulb icon and the text 'Add your idea'. The other five cards represent submitted ideas, each with a user profile picture (lightbulb icon), a timestamp of 'about 2 months ago', a title, a description, and interaction metrics (comments and likes).

Title	Description	Comments	Likes
Dropped Curbs	These are important and the council could speed up response times to these	1	0
Go beyond the usual media channels when advertising vacancies	Take the adverts to the places where particular communities congregate, especially if wanting to win trust and so	0	0
Support for unpaid carers	Continue the Carers Caffi peer support group, allow Carers Leave to be taken in hours rather than as a half day minimum, improve line managers understanding of	0	0
Organise community events that focus on different aspects of communities e.g. International day to celebrate ethnic makeup of RCT.		0	0
Progression	The council could more efficiently share our progression on products with members of the public.	0	1

Figure 4: Ideas Board - Do you have any ideas that would help us reduce inequalities in the workplace and in our communities?

4.12 The full text of these comments is available in an appendix for officers to view.

APPENDIX 1

This Appendix contains the full comments from the online Let's Talk Equalities engagement exercise, both from the survey (4 questions) and the Ideas Board.

These comments are confidential and should not be published publicly.

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Question	Page
Question 1: Do you agree with our proposed equality objectives? (Please tell us why not.)	2
Question 2: Do you think that our proposed equality objectives will promote and embed equality and diversity into the services the Council provides? (Please tell us why not.)	3
Question 3: Do you think that it is important for our proposed equality objectives to focus on developing our workforce? (Please tell us why not.)	4
Question 4: Do you have any other comments about the proposed Strategic Equality Plan?	5
Ideas Board: Do you have any ideas that would help us reduce inequalities in the workplace and in our communities?	10

Question 1: Do you agree with our proposed equality objectives? (Please tell us why not.)

Everybody should be treated the same, treating some groups differently for whatever reason is unfair

I agree with the objectives generally, however I am disappointed that unpaid carers, including our working staff who are unpaid carers, are not mentioned or referenced in any of the objectives. Although not technically covered under equalities legislation per se, other than by association, unpaid caring is strongly linked to other characteristics, including age and sex. These issues are paramount to ensuring a viable workforce in the future. As such it should at least be referenced or alluded to within the strategy.

No account taken for years of service

Too much emphasis is given on the rights of those with 'protected qualities' than on those who disagree with them on moral grounds. It's like because we don't concur with their view, our views are not respected, and at worst condemned. That in itself is a form of discrimination.

Hire the best person for the job not the one that fits the quota.

I feel that by striving to be more inclusive to minority groups, myself as a white male has less of a chance to get a position based on my qualification and experience rather than my age, gender or ethnicity.

Employees should be right in person not right colour

The council needs to focus on providing basic services cost efficiently not playing identity politics which serve to divide the public.

Question 2: Do you think that our proposed equality objectives will promote and embed equality and diversity into the services the Council provides? (Please tell us why not.)

The RCT has failed in recent times for certain demographics of people who were linked within the council. In 2023 alone, they resulted in RCT Pride disbanding due to the Pontypridd Pride event being cancelled without any explanation as to this on any fronts, or ways to correct this for all people, especially LGBTQ+ people within the Rhondda Cynon Taff to celebrating their diversity and inclusion in a healthy way.

Just give the job to the best person for the job

- There is little capacity to prioritise this in addition to other requirements placed on managers already
- understanding of population demographics to gauge our performance in reflecting the population is not available
- There is little reflection in the document of the tension for teams to perform and fulfill statutory duties with less resource whilst positively supporting and making adjustments for people with disabilities for example. All managers are keen to support their staff in when they are having difficulties but its becoming more difficult as numbers are cut. Not saying we shouldn't just saying this document needs to reflect on that otherwise it fails to reflect reality

1) I think you have missed in the introduction the support we already provide to unpaid carers within our workforce and 2) how this could be supported under the equality umbrella to further develop inclusive workplaces.

Due to financial constraints

The more a community highlight differences the more we detract from being a community - multiculturalism is a failed experiment.

As 74% of the workforce is female, I believe that as a white male, I have been overlooked for jobs because of my gender. Over the last 6 years, I have applied for 14 grade 6 jobs and got to interview but then did not get the job. All the jobs were taken by women. One of the positions was re-advertised within 2 years because the female that took it moved on.

It needs to be something everyone believes in and part of. Not all staff will get to see or feel part of this until someone take the time to devolve the information to all staff.

Your having a laugh I applied for 40 jobs this
Year not only am I not good enough for the job I now I'm not gay or black enough

I don't trust this Council to do the work needed.

As above

Question 3: Do you think that it is important for our proposed equality objectives to focus on developing our workforce? (Please tell us why not.)

Because people should be recruited because they are the best person for the job. Not because you need to employ a certain number of people based on protected qualities to make you look good. Too many people from protected quality backgrounds is counterintuitive because it doesn't give a balanced view.

As above

Just give the job to the best person for the job

It should not just be there to develop the workforce it should be used to empower it also as these staff are the council not just the workforce. They are the community and they represent more than just the council.

working in public sector i think it should be focused on everyone customers/public and workforce this is the only way to make changes not just focused on workforce.

This work is costing money and during a period in our lives when the council is cutting services to save money, this is zero priority.

The workforce would develop naturally if more work was done in communities (given most of the workforce lives IN THOSE COMMUNITIES)

There is no room for advancement through experience/time spent in the job. I have taken on several extra rolls within admin but there is no room for promotion in my current roll. If you focus on getting a diverse employment force, you will overlook qualified people and get a lower productive force within RCT.

CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT

Question 4: Do you have any other comments about the proposed Strategic Equality Plan?

Nothing to add, I feel that the STP is well written and sets out clear achievable objectives.

I think it should be more explicit on the current workforce as it all's about new people and talking to rct residents but I think it would benefit from more from a staff angle. Felt like we have been left out thanks
I liked the easy read

I feel in order to create inclusive and supportive workplaces this plan needs to cover elements of equality and diversity that aren't strictly speaking covered by legislation, such as unpaid caring responsibilities.

It doesn't say what you are going to do

NOTHING TO ADD

It would be great to also have some additional manager guidance on recruiting from a diversity perspective, for example in terms of recruitment adverting

A lot of it does make sense and is a good hopefully future. However with how some RCT courses have been run while I am seeking employment through services such as Communities For Work Plus, and seeing inward refusal of service to the likes of RCT Pride in 2023, it does have ben concerned for my safety as an LGBTQ+ person currently living within the Rhondda Cynon Taff.

No

I think that people who live alone are more likely to be overlooked or that lone living/working could detrimentally underline a persons access to inclusion or having appropriate consideration? Loneliness impacts on a persons confidence and sense of worth, those with protected characteristics (LGBT; Disabled) could be more prone to isolation. Perhaps future staff survey's could include employees living in solo occupancy, and then give appropriate consideration to such isolation when considering 'Homeworking' or Occupational Health considerations (someone with work related stress could perhaps work from home, but if living in isolation might not be the right reccomendation.

Satisfying the public and workforce needs, Really important and a great plan. Information on council progression being shared to forums

it sounds a bit vague and I'm not sure I can support it fully without real targets and promises. Saing you want to develop the workforce is all very well but what does that mean in numbers. You dont know how maany people from discrimated groups are put off from applying already or who dont feel safe being themselves in work and Id want to see actual concrete plans and promises here to believe it will change for the better.

Option to work from home when needed for those who are disabled or suffer from chronic conditions.

If this plan extends to Council Tax payers then I wish to raise the on-going reluctance by RCTCBC to deal directly with me over my concern over the whereabouts of my Donations to the failed ...Powerhouse Trust .

Please make sure you are abiding by the law and the Equality Act 2010. Some lobby groups give advice on what they would like the law to be rather than what it actually states. Since 75% of the staff are female then single sex spaces should be widely available rather than converting to mixed gender/sex spaces.

In your easy to read guide you say that you will speak with shops - might I suggest this is extended to include businesses as many businesses are not shops i.e. professional services.

Seems a little to involved and timely both to set up so far and looking at the requiremnts going forward, when we could focus on our work

Just a few points from the draft proposal;

Point 4 - Mentions that RCT will 'call out' behaviour that harms.... Perhaps that could be rephrased....'We will not tolerate' - also, put in place a confidential and supportive process when such behaviour is identified.

Point 5 - Third paragraph....external agencies such Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board AND South Wales Police - as opposed to 'or'

Point 6 - EDI. Look to incorporate EDI training into the workplace to encourage staff to firstly; talk about topics, and to secondly - see how person/s of an BAME feel that living in a predominantly white environment affects the way they are perceived.

Objective 3 - Inclusion - consideration of a disability support network within the council as in SWP.

PS 1441 Phillips - Pontypridd Police Station - 09/01/2024.

Any plan like this is only going to be successful if driven by a senior leadership team that reflects its objectives in their own opinions and attitudes. If there are significant decision makers with longstanding roles in the same position, who hold outdated opinions or have low-risk decision making style; then the same past Diversity and Inclusion "errors" could continue to happen.

An externally-led full SLT review may be a good starting point to see if RCT does have the kind of required leadership before putting this ambitious plan into action. It needs to mean something and lead to better outcomes for affected staff and not just be a nice idea that remains good on paper.

I believe it is very likely that some staff have lost out on pay and progression because of previously undiagnosed conditions that might have been mistaken for "laziness," "obstinance" or "poor interview technique," but were in fact were very likely a result of a specific condition now diagnosed. Could there be some sort of "no blame" one-off past RCT career review as part of ongoing performance reviews, where the Council reflects that perhaps a compensatory pay honorarium might be appropriate in some cases?

not at this time.

Not at this time

This is something that should already be in place. However the acknowledgement to get it right is commendable.

RCT desperately need to give anti racism training to employees, it must be the only local authority that doesn't. The latest closest training has been cultural competency which is basic and dated. I have asked multiple times for the training and have been told there is not a demand for it. RCT has a responsibility to ensure its employees are anti racist and equipped with the tools to do so.

RCT does not have a baby/pregnancy loss policy, this currently falls under sick leave. Most private and public sectors do and allow for leave under these circumstances.

Just stop. It's good to be different but don't make that the main driving force in everything. The issue with equality directives like this is that it typically involves equity which is essentially unfair. People are people, nothing more nothing less. I don't care if someone is ginger, of Sudanese decent or drinks the blood of goats, it doesn't matter, so don't create a policy where this stuff is used to make division.

No

To engage with those who fall under the umbrella for their input

Money can be better spent elsewhere in the service. There is too much reporting on meeting targets or complying with needless legislation. I don't need or want to know how many people with protected qualities' you've employed.

One of the statements is regarding 74% of the workforce is female adding to the gender pay gap. An amount of female workers are probably home makers and only work part time as are traditional rolls within RCT. The structure of pay bands in RCT means that Men and Women in the same band are paid the same ie. Band 5 payrates are the same for which ever gender is working that roll. Men tend to work longer hours and take on higher band rolls as most would feel a need to be the breadwinner.

The plan sounds very positive however there is a long way to go if the distance between what the plan says RCT wants to be like and how RCT currently treat their staff.

The following phrases from the foreword and section 2 were very problematic:

“We recognise and value the benefits of a diverse workforce”

“duty to tackle discrimination and disadvantage so people feel safe from harassment”

“inclusive working environment” and

“remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic”

As a person with a disability working for RCT I have never felt valued and have experienced disadvantage and discrimination from my employers. If RCT want to remove the disadvantages they need to stop punishing their disabled staff who have disability related sick leave, signed off by their doctors yet being subjected to disciplinary hearing for “misconduct” when they have done nothing wrong apart from being born with a disability.

To then have occupational health reports used as evidence against them in disciplinary hearings, when their employers have disregarded the recommendations from Occ health doctors for years is especially cruel , as is sending letters that arrive on the weekend informing people that they are subject to a disciplinary hearing and are being classed as “misconduct” and “absenteeism” when they are in fact disabled and giving every ounce of energy they have to being in work and it’s the job and punitive systems and total lack of support or understanding that is making them too ill to be in work in the first place.

In section 4 you say that RCT has a commitment to “lead change and be brave” and that you have the backs of your staff but you won’t even consider a reduced working week when someone is requesting this just so that they can avoid getting so unwell that they need time off work. Even when your own Occupational Health department are agreeing that this will drastically improve performance, productivity and attendance for that member of staff.

You also say you “communicate the rationale for decisions” when in reality a formal request for a reduction in hours, including a clear rationale for how this would benefit the service and the member of staff, went unanswered for weeks , then was dismissed out of hand and when the member of staff asked for the rationale for their request being decline without any discussion, was told “those are private emails between managers so you can’t have access to them”. Then when the member staff became too unwell to work again they too were punished when they returned to work by the unfair and discriminatory “absence management policy”.

If RCT honestly wanted to improve attendance at work they would listen when their employees are telling them what will help or at least have the common courtesy to have a discussion about it. *(continues overleaf)*

(continued from previous page)

People with disabilities use their annual leave just to try to remain well enough to stay in work, meaning they have less chance of a proper break to rest and recuperate. This in turn has a negative affect on their health making it even more likely that they will be too unwell to remain in work. If people were not terrified by the disciplinary process they are subjected to and told “we must see improvement”, then they wouldn’t have to use annual leave to try to manage their health condition.

Also if requests for reduction to hours ,which comes with a pay cut, which again is discriminatory because if they were not disabled they could work full time without becoming so unwell their doctor signs them off, were taken seriously then disabled people would have the chance to have a work life balance like non disabled people do. Instead, people are belittled and degraded by a HR process that completely disadvantages people with disabilities. Even when Occ health recommend that triggers for the policy are individualised for the person with a disability, this is completely ignored.

If RCT are serious about the claim that one of the things they will do to address Objective 3 is to review HR policies then they really must look at the punitive, degrading and discriminatory absence management policy as a matter of urgency because it is making people ill and I wouldn’t be surprised if it doesn’t lead to people taking their lives.

Also in objective 3 you mention reasonable adjustments and how the onus is on the disabled person. This is correct and it sets people up to fail because if what you suggest doesn’t work then there’s no where else to turn. Attitudes need to be addressed that lead to comments like “we can’t support you forever” and “you can’t have that, it’s unfair to the rest of the team who don’t get special treatment” and “no one else has a problem with the system” etc etc that have been said to people within formal reasonable adjustments meetings. Again, this totally blames the disabled person and makes them feel useless and a burden.

On a more positive note the staff forums are a brilliant source of support and do make people with protected characteristics feel seen and heard by RCT . I hope that these continue and that they can be a way for RCT to see that we do have a lot to offer and are good employees, just because we are different does not make us substandard.

It would be great if this plan is implemented well and that in the future people will be able to genuinely say “the council values me as an employee and I feel safe and supported in work”.

I think the importance of simplifying recruitment processes in some areas is a key component of attracting a wider range and diversity of staff. For example, competency based applications for practical roles does not suit the applicant or support the employer in understanding how well the person can undertake the role.

It doesn't matter what species you have working for RCT just as long as it's the right species and doing a good job.

I would like to think that this plan is already in place.

The Strategic Equality Plan needs to be shared across the whole of the council and not just the office based workforce. The staff not based in offices feel they have no voice in some aspects of what the council do or are providing.

No

It is very wishy-washy

we need to listen to what is being asked for and not just thinking that we know the answers. small changes make a massive difference to diverse groups. we need to change our public facilities as in toilets/ changing rooms making these non-gendered and accessible.

Overall, the plan feels thought out, evidence-based and seems to have strong rationale. There are some areas that would benefit from further detail.

Objective 1 (What We Will Do) -

1. How? What does this look like?

4 - What would this look like? 'EDI regularly features' could be rephrased to 'EDI is regularly monitored and discussed at...'

Objective 2 (What We Will Do) -

- 'Improve the uptake of completion of workforce equality monitoring data' - How?

'Improve the number of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority candidates applying for jobs.' - How?

- 'Review our existing Recruitment and Selection policy and practices with the intention of removing any bias.' - What will this look like? Diverse interview panels? Unconscious bias training for interview panels? What personal information will be redacted in job applications?

- 'Offer initiatives such as mentoring programmes that benefit under-represented groups of staff.' - What will this look like? How will it be structured? Will mentors have shared lived experience with their mentees? Will this be an additional workload or will steps be taken to mitigate this? Will you work with anyone else?

Objective 3 (What We Will Do) -

2. Can you be specific on what EDI topics will be included? E.g. anti-racism

5. How?

Overall, there does not seem to be a focus on collaborative working e.g. with community representatives or outside organisations/individuals with expertise in specific areas - consider whether this should be included.

No, There is a clear plan for this going forward.

As a charity who support the D/deaf community in RCT, we are concerned that the plan itself is not Deaf Aware nor is it accessible for BSL users. Therefore, although we do feel this is a step in the right direction, there still seems to be a lot of work to be done to improve Deaf Awareness within RCTCBC. The BSL Act was passed in 2022 and it is disheartening that this council led document is inaccessible for this recognised language. Even though there is an easy read document, it may come across to the Deaf community as condescending and a version in BSL will be more appropriate.

Idea	Reply/ies
<p>Support for unpaid carers</p> <p>Continue the Carers Caffi peer support group, allow Carers Leave to be taken in hours rather than as a half day minimum, improve line managers understanding of the challenges working carers face, increase awareness across the Council of support for staff who have caring responsibilities. Working Carers are adversely affected in the workplace - as a result of the significant challenges of juggling work and caring. Research from Carers UK tells us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each year, over 2 million people give up work to care and 3 million reduce their working hours. • 600 people a day give up work to care and many others reduce their working hours. • Men and women who care for 20 or more hours a week are much less likely to be in higher level jobs. 	
<p>Organise community events that focus on different aspects of communities e.g. International day to celebrate ethnic makeup of RCT.</p>	
<p>Go beyond the usual media channels when advertising vacancies</p> <p>Take the adverts to the places where particular communities congregate, especially if wanting to win trust and so encourage qualified individuals to believe they stand as good a chance as any others. It would require more effort but that would be equity to get all applicants viewing the advert at the same level.</p>	
<p>Dropped Curbs</p> <p>These are important and the council could speed up response times to these</p>	<p>And remove the restrictions that they can only be installed by certain contractors charging over inflated prices. They should be installed by any competent constructor at a competitive price.</p>
<p>Progression</p> <p>The council could more efficiently share our progression on products with members of the public.</p>	

APPENDIX 2

This Appendix contains comments and notes from in-person and online engagement activities around the Let's Talk Equalities project, and an emailed response from People First.

These comments are confidential and should not be published publicly.

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Equality Clinic SEP Comments

Backing from Senior Leadership Team is great

Balanced

Diverse

Participants planning more training and has taking notes as can ensure it falls in line

Thinking about their own work

Complaints being centralised and ensuring they are followed through correctly and not forgotten

Everyone gets listened to

Removing the Bias

Aligning and embedding throughout the council will help within our communities

Culture change

Allowing everyone to be made aware that Equality is for everyone and benefits everyone

Young people

More positive and visual training for young trans people and the organisation and communities

intergeneration work

Breaking down the perception of young and old

Inclusive communities

Safe Place

Survey feedback seems to be the same that they give views but the nothing comes from it so ensuring we are showing we are doing what staff are asking.

engaging with staff

how we communicate with our staff

SEP taking on board our comments and feeding back into this

effective communicating

Veterans Consultation**Taf Ely Veterans 31/1/2024****Present 22**

General agreement that all three priorities were appropriate, especially agreeing on ensuring training for Council staff. Issues raised included Disabled access, Parking, scheduling of events, and clarity of responsibility.

Comments:

“Can we make sure that Armed forces days do not coincide with other events like Pride.”

“Disabled access with transport in RCT is shocking at the moment. Particularly in Ponty.”

“How will we know if you are doing what you say?”

“Pavement Parking is getting worse.”

“Sometimes it feels like we are getting a runaround, Council say speak to the police and the police tell us to talk to the Council.” Related to pavement parking.

Valley Veterans 1/02/2024**Present 45**

General agreement on all three priorities from all concerned. Issues raised included Reliance on IT systems, training on neurodiverse matters, funding for charity groups, Race, recycling.

Comments:

“The Council do amazing work supporting us, especially Councillor Webber, we are very lucky to have her fighting our corner.”

“The funding strategy for RCT needs reviewing, for support groups, this first come first served doesn't work, the causes should be assessed.”

“More training on autism and ADHD should be given to people in education, some of them have no idea how to deal with children with autism, they just assume and treat them like naughty kids.”

“More awareness for veterans please.”

“Training for Council staff is needed, along with awareness of what support is out there for people, I had to explain to one of the Council resettlement staff on the phone that the Council has an Armed Forces Liaison Officer.”

“Race is still a big issue in the valleys, but it's just how people speak sometimes.”

“For me it's all this digital stuff, I don't have a mobile phone, I don't want one, but if I need to do anything I have to rely on people here to help me as I don't do computers.”

“Disability hasn't really been looked at, especially hidden disabilities, lots of people make assumptions, and there isn't enough information out there.”

“Recycling is too confusing, I'm sure most peoples rubbish must end up in the landfills because they get it wrong, and now I have to take some of my rubbish to supermarkets. How am I supposed to do that?”

People First Feedback

Here is some feedback on the Equality plan 2024 - 2027 from People First members:

The plan is a good plan to make it better there could be:

- * More paid employment and voluntary opportunities for people with a learning disability within the council.
- * More reasonable adjustments need to be made for people to access apprenticeships with the support they need
- * the council should produce easy read information in all departments
- * all council staff should have learning disability equality awareness training

Valleys Ethnic Support Group Feedback

Valleys Ethnic Support Group (VEMS)
Attendance at Coffee Morning – 7 February 2024
5 members present
Consultation on SEP

Recruitment/Working for the Council

You can't access the Council- it's like an institution. Not just a problem for the Council but also the police and NHS. We don't know where to find out about the jobs.

We need some support on the recruitment process and help with applications

Specific sessions on sponsorship would be helpful.

An individual shared they had had a difficult experience whilst working for the Council.

There was possible racism involved. They felt isolated and there was a lack of understanding from colleagues. One of their friends also works for the Council and they too are having a difficult experience.

There needs to be a safe place to report concerns without having to worry about consequences from colleagues.

Awareness

Raising awareness of issues with the workforce is importance.

Someone needs to go to all schools and talk about Anti-Racism.

It's difficult to find out about Council services – there should be a newsletter or leaflets.

Support

Clarification is needed on peoples' role in the Council, for example, community cohesion and equality. How do these roles support us?

Other

Council libraries are really important to members of the group. The ESOL classes are run there. Pontypridd Library is attractive and inclusive. It's used as a community space more than a library – to do jigsaws and read papers.

Need to be more creative with foster care – ethnic minority families have a lot to offer.