

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council

Annual Equality Report

1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

This report is available in Welsh and can be made available in alternative formats and languages.

To make a request please telephone 01443 444529 or email equality@rctcbc.gov.uk

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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 241,264 people. The Council is the largest employer in the local area and the third largest local authority in Wales, over 80% 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 proposed priorities set out in the [Corporate Plan 2020-2024 'Making a Difference'](#) 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.

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 2020 to 31 March 2021.

What the regulations require:

The Annual Report for 2020-2021 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 it considered when reviewing its 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.

When reviewing the Equality Objectives we looked at monitoring reports and emerging issues and trends from the previous Annual Equality Reports to identify whether the objectives were still relevant.

Full details can be found in the SEP which can be accessed on the Council website at: [Strategic Equality Plan | Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council](#)

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. To collect this information a survey was undertaken to obtain relevant information from service areas.

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

Employment monitoring data as provided from the Council's HR system 'Vision' and the e-recruitment system have also been included as part of the relevant information. 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 'Making a Difference'](#). 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 (2020-2021)
- Employment practices
- Consultation and engagement programme
- EIAs (2020-2021)
- Employment monitoring information (2020-2021)
- Monitoring and delivery of the SEP action plan (2020-2021).

Equality Information from Service Areas

Many service areas have examples of good practice which help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duties. The information is normally obtained through our internal performance management systems. This section highlights a snapshot of some of the good practice examples that the Council has in place to demonstrate our compliance and commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duties.

Children's Services

Following an independent review, inspection and staff consultation a revised model of supporting disabled children and their families was put in place and changes made to the staffing structure to facilitate delivery. All referrals for disabled children now follow the same process as any other referral into Children's Services and a specialist Social Worker is in place to carry out an assessment as required. This role is bringing consistency to decision making.

In other operational business:

- Translators are obtained to support families where English is not the first language.

- Meetings with family members are held in accessible locations and public transport links are taken into account.
- A Prevention Payment Policy (previously s.17) makes financial support available to prevent need and risk escalating due to resources.
- An employment scheme is in place to support care leavers into work.

Community Services

Community Services deliver a wide range of provision that focusses on people with disabilities, people who are vulnerable because of a range of issues or who are affected by poverty.

During the pandemic, once lockdown was initiated, services focused on ensuring that people in the following groups were prioritised for support:

- Individuals on the Shielded Patients List (SPL) now referred to as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable List (CEV)
- Non-shielding vulnerable individuals who were not on the SPL.

Individuals on the SPL were contacted individually, (the majority by phone, a small number by letter when no phone details were available) and their needs assessed. This included identifying whether they were eligible for a Welsh Government free food parcel, whether they had special dietary requirements (in which case they would be supported through the newly established Food Distribution Centre (FDC)), whether they were lonely or fearful and would like a weekly friendly phone call, whether they needed support to do their shopping/pick up prescriptions.

NHS Shielded/Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Patients

2020 - 2021	Children's records	Adult's records	Total
Shielding Period to August 15 th	435	11,203	11,638
31 March 2021	129	11,581	11,710

Non-shielding vulnerable individuals were able to contact the Council's Contact Centre by phone or complete an online form (or ask a third party to complete it on their behalf) and their request would be transferred to the relevant Hub Co-ordinator in their local area. Written information, developed to communicate with individuals was provided in easy read format for those who required it. A significant number of staff across Community Services have undertaken training on Easy Read formats.

For people on the SPL who received Welsh Government food parcels, an administrative process was adopted that ensured that if a parcel was delivered to an address and there was no response, the information was uploaded on to a database and the RCT Together Team contacted that person to ensure that they were well. If there was no response after 3 telephone calls a Community Response Volunteer was sent to the address to check on the status of the individual. 700 of these checks were undertaken by volunteers during lockdown.

Special arrangements were made locally for people who had mobility issues or dietary requirements that were not accommodated by the Welsh Government provision. These were dealt with by the FDC staff, who (using appropriate PPE) carried the food parcels into a person's home if they were unable to do so themselves and provided bespoke parcels for people with a wide range of dietary requirements due to allergies or religious requirements.

Residents are still able to request emergency food parcels with 64 parcels being delivered during this financial year to vulnerable residents, including those fleeing domestic violence.

Community Services have been working very closely with Citizens Advice (CA) and partners to promote the support available for Universal Credit (UC) claimants as the UK Government has removed the uplift provided to UC customers throughout the pandemic. This has included information on social media and the Council website, dissemination of information to all Council staff and distribution across a wide range of partner networks. In addition to the offer of welfare checks and debt advice from CA, the Adult Education service has developed free budgeting courses for those who need this support.

More generally, Community Services offer a range of support as part of their provision that focusses on improving the lives of those who are disadvantaged through ill-health, disability, economic circumstances as follows:

- All library staff have undertaken Dementia Friendly training and every library has a Dementia Champion.
- Library Managers have undergone Neurodiversity training so that they have a better understanding of how to support people with neuro difference.
- An expanded range of large print books, e-books and e-audiobooks ensure that materials are available for all sections of the community – there are also some braille materials and a facility where people can identify which books they would like to access in braille, and these can then be ordered.
- The Library Service actively supports local and national initiatives designed to promote inclusiveness and diversity, for example promoting books by Black and Minority Ethnic authors.

- The @home library service continued to provide access to reading and audio materials to people who were unable to access their local library due to temporary or permanent illness or frailty or who desperately required books for their mental health during the lockdown. This service continues as normal but with an increased number of residents registered for the service now.
- The Community Development Team have advocated for and facilitated the installation of adult changing places facilities in community hubs and other community venues. 5 Adult changing places have been sited within Community Resilience Hubs and community buildings.
- Community Development and Adult Social Care have collaborated with community groups to develop volunteering placements for people with a learning disability (8 are engaged currently).
- Specific provision was developed by the Adult Education Team for people with moderate to severe learning disabilities and this was maintained throughout 2020 for those who were happy to engage in online provision.
- Employment support provision continued albeit at a reduced rate up to July 2020 and since then the team have continued to have success in supporting people into work. 17% of the people supported into employment in 2020/21 have either a disability or a self-declared work limiting health condition.
- Employment support provision has been actively engaged in the Transformation programme for people with learning disabilities and will form part of a working group looking at work placement and employment opportunities for identified day centre clients.
- Communities for Work Plus managers are designated disability leads and attend Welsh Government Disability Network meetings and Employment Support staff teams have attended several training sessions.

Community Safety and Community Housing

Both core and grant funded services are available to our most vulnerable individuals, communities, and others most impacted by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Housing Support Grant funded services cover those experiencing homelessness, rough sleepers, mental ill health, substance misuse, young people including those leaving care, domestic abuse. Additional support services such as Housing First have been commissioned to provide tenancy and outreach support services to individuals with complex needs.

The Homefinder Team have worked closely with the Diversity and Inclusion Team for advice and support on appropriate wording and use of language for those who wish to make an application for housing for applicants whose personal identity does not

correspond with their birth sex. Ongoing work is being undertaken with the Diversity and Inclusion Team for applicants seeking housing who have a disability.

We also work closely with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board and are members of their various sub-groups and participate in Client Strategy Meetings and Domestic Homicide Reviews.

The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board Substance Misuse Lead and the Head of Community Safety and Community Housing are both members of the Co-occurring Steering Group led by Health. This will further explore how the most vulnerable members of our community with both a substance misuse and mental health need can be offered a single point of contact approach to seek the help they need.

The Oasis Centre service provision is available for both male and female individuals who are or have experienced domestic abuse. Women's Aid RCT are also commissioned to provide a housing related service to anyone in need of domestic abuse support in their own home.

The service area is also involved with the Serious Neglect Panel (SNPP) and the local multi-agency working arrangements agreed by the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board to provide an escalation process for managing cases of serious self-neglect linked with vulnerable individuals. The SNPP will be chaired by the Local Authority area Adult Safeguarding Manager. The Vice Chair will be the Head of Community Safety and Community Housing.

The Community Safety Team place a large emphasis on supporting vulnerable and repeat victims of anti-social behaviour. They identify these victims at the earliest opportunity and put safeguarding measures in place to support the victim.

The Community Safety Team continue to work with families engaged in the Global Resettlement Programme. We also play a pivotal role in assisting dispersal areas and engaging in the Home Office Widening Asylum Dispersal Scheme.

We have also positively engaged at a strategic level with the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership (WSMP) and are a member of, and attend the WSMP Executive Board which covers many aspects of our wider immigration role and work for vulnerable migrants.

Community Well-being and Resilience Service (CWRS)

The primary driver for CWRS is the removal of barriers for children, young people and families to access the right support, at the right time, in the right place, and in doing so ensure that service provision is equitable and accessible for our most vulnerable residents. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is a fundamental pillar and principle across the service and all aspects of our work is focused on effective targeting of service

delivery and service improvements to reduce inequalities. This has enabled the service to respond quickly and efficiently to the needs of vulnerable individuals and families in light of the pandemic and tailor support according to differing needs.

Our Early Years Transformation work this year has delivered on our commitment to remove the two-tiered system in RCT as a result of the geographical limitations of the Flying Start Programme and already there is evidence that children and families who would not normally have been eligible for support are accessing and benefiting from this service change delivered by CWRS.

The Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS) has a Youth Engagement Officer who is able to offer specialist support and advice to young people who are LGBT+. This specialist support includes working with young people who are transitioning, their families and schools to ensure that bespoke and robust plans are in place to provide practical and emotional support throughout the process of transition. The LGBT+ Youth Forum has also been relaunched this year.

In 2021 the Resilient Family Service (RFS) commissioned training to help support families marginalised by their status and to give staff the confidence and knowledge to better support families affected by this. Specifically, to provide RFS staff training to support participants to explore the needs of various groups of migrants and ensure a consistent response to their needs. It also aimed to support practitioners to work confidently when individuals are subject to the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' regime and to understand what services are able to support them when working with various groups of migrants. This will support the work RFS does with refugee and asylum seeker families in RCT.

RFS regularly link in with Umbrella Cymru to help support LGBTQ+ young people and their families and all RFS staff have completed training with Umbrella Cymru to assist in their knowledge base on all LGBTQ+ issues so that any RFS intervention provided is relevant, meaningful and inclusive.

Staff are encouraged to participate in staff networks and EDI sessions arranged by the Diversity and Inclusion Team. Advice on disability issues facing staff within the service has been sought from HR, working alongside the Diversity and Inclusion Team.

Travel training is delivered by YEPS Post-16 Team for young people in need of assistance with road safety awareness and knowledge of how to travel by public transport. Travel training is particularly beneficial to individuals who have Additional Learning Needs (ALN) who are often transported by arranged taxi until they leave school. Access to further education, work placements, training and other life opportunities can then become very daunting because they have no prior experience in preparing and planning journeys independently. Many will be unfamiliar with where to find the information or advice or even the skills to make journeys themselves. Whilst this work has been on hold during the pandemic, YEPS are in the process of restarting the

programme of training it delivers in partnership with the Council's Integrated Transport Unit.

A new youth forum subgroup has been established, Equality and Inclusion, at the request of young people in the County Youth Forum. The work of this group will feed into both the County Youth Forum, school councils and into the service improvement cycle of the YEP service. To date, the subgroup has undertaken a survey with young people via social media platforms, asking for their opinions on what is needed to make RCT a more inclusive county for LGBTQ+ young people. These results will influence the work-plan of the group.

Preventing youth homelessness continues to be a priority for the service, and whilst the number of young people presenting as homeless has reduced over the past year, it is likely that there are many young people who do not have a permanent residence and are temporarily living with other family members or friends. The service continues to develop its universal interventions to reduce the risk of homelessness, like awareness sessions and education programmes to improve life skills. These are delivered both in schools and youth clubs. The service has also piloted a project with Llamau called Upstream Cymru, to identify those most at risk of becoming homeless in the future. It was piloted in two secondary schools (Mountain Ash and Aberdare) with one year group in each. Pupils completed a survey comprising of questions regarding contributing factors to homelessness (well-being, resilience, bullying, family/home life, education achievement). The results helped to identify those most at risk of becoming homeless in the future and these were referred to Llamau workers based in the two schools (or virtual referrals during lockdown). The workers strived to build resilience and improve the family relationship with the aim of maintaining the placement in the family home. The learning from this pilot project has been used to develop a youth homelessness vulnerability profiling tool that can be rolled out to all schools in 2022. Once identified, YEPS will provide a series of young person centred and family interventions to improve relationships that allow the young person to remain within the family home. The level of demand for this intervention will be closely monitored and if required the potential for funding to provide additional resources will be explored.

YEPS has 5 Specialist Youth Workers to provide targeted and open access interventions focused on mental/emotional health and well-being. These Mental Health and Well-being Officers provide direct mentoring, support, information and guidance relating to health and well-being to young people as well as:

- Generate opportunities and services that are informed by mental health and well-being principles;
- Increase opportunities for support and progression for young people within localities;

- Improve the awareness of health and well-being needs amongst young people and professionals across RCT;
- Provide advice and guidance to other professionals, enabling them to better meet the needs of the young people they support.

This team has developed collaborations with private sector businesses to provide targeted support to vulnerable hard to reach groups identified following data analysis. An example of this is the weekly men's mental health and well-being drop-in sessions held in The National Cut Hut Barbers in Aberdare for young men aged 18-25 in response to high rates of attempted suicide and drug use in the locality. As with new ventures of this sort, initial uptake has been slow but both YEPS and The National Cut Hut Barbers are committed to establishing the service.

Care2Play is available for children and young people aged 5-25 years who require assistance, as a result of their personal or family circumstances, to access and/or engage in play opportunities and youth activities. The ethos of the service is to ensure that all children and young people have access to opportunities that are appropriate to their needs and wherever possible are delivered as part of mainstream universal provision. Over the period of the pandemic whilst universal play opportunities ceased, this service, with the support of commissioned providers, has continued to deliver targeted weekly play opportunities to over 300 of the most vulnerable children in RCT referred to the service by Children's Services, Disabled Children's Team and RFS. This service has provided invaluable support to children and families most affected by the removal of preventative support as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. It has played a key role in preventing family breakdown for children on the Child Protection Register and disabled children with care and support needs as well as maintaining the low step up rates from RFS to statutory teams during this time.

Well-being packs were created and distributed by YEPS during lockdown, aimed at helping young people with additional learning needs or in need of well-being support. The packs provided positive activities, advice on mindfulness and de-stressing techniques, as well as key contact information for them to use when in lockdown. Packs have been sent out to over 200 young people struggling with the social restrictions and included:

- Life journals
- Affirmation cards
- Art pads
- Colouring pens
- Stress ball
- Chatter box – providing daily tips on supporting well-being.

Feedback has been positive, and the life journals will become a legacy of the pandemic, to be used with future referrals as appropriate.

We have begun work on the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA), that is due to be submitted early 2022, part of which is to ensure that parks, playgrounds and other outdoor play settings are accessible to as many residents as possible. This includes wheelchair access to enter the parks and to access the play equipment. Funding for this is underpinned by the equality of access to services for all, including addressing barriers facing particular groups of people. The creation of a single point of access via the Resilient Families Service has facilitated equity of access to service delivery, enabling services to be responsive to any needs identified. Our vision of delivering the right services, to the right people, at the right time, in the right place, supports the delivery of equitable and easily accessible needs based services. Addressing, and where possible, removing barriers to access and engagement for particular groups, including, but not limited to, those with protected characteristics, is an ongoing priority. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken for the original 2019/20 CCG grant application and remains applicable.

Appropriate information sharing has continued to ensure appropriate packages of support are in place for those who remain vulnerable as a result of the pandemic.

Prioritising vulnerable children (including disabled children) for play provision continues to provide support for the child and wider family to prevent family breakdown and escalation of need, whilst also enabling services to maintain a level of contact with children and young people known to be at risk.

Services continue to use innovative solutions to remove barriers to access and engagement, including the use of digital solutions.

The Parenting through COVID-19 public survey identified barriers to accessing informal parenting support faced by families. The recommissioning of parenting support provision has been undertaken to address this in the longer term. Newly commissioned services include the provision of a virtual parenting offer as well as face-to-face informal parenting support (with clear pathways to accessing more formal or specialist support) delivered in local community settings available in the evenings as well as during the day.

The Funding Flexibilities Team regularly review commissioned services to ensure they are fit for purpose, deliver value for money and ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the community. Findings from consultations and reviews are then used to inform future commissioning decisions. The regular review of services provides an opportunity for a more co-ordinated approach to planning and service delivery with the aim of maximising resources and improving outcomes whilst ensuring better value for money and improved equal access for all service users.

Corporate Estates

The Director of Corporate Estates is the Council's senior lead for the Disability and Carers Staff Network. The role involves regular contact with the staff network and provision of advice and taking forward initiatives to the Senior Leadership Team for consideration.

Many Council public buildings are accessible and reasonable adaptations have been undertaken where practicable and reasonable to ensure services are accessible to all.

The Corporate Maintenance section have been involved with a number of projects which have incorporated Changing Places facilities, such as Dare Valley Country Park shower block extension, Ynysangharad Park Lido/Café and The Hwbs at Mountain Ash and Ferndale.

Democratic Services

Democratic Services have a key role in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion which includes:

- Promoting Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) with Cabinet reports;
- Working in partnership with the Diversity and Inclusion Manager on the work undertaken in respect of diversity in democracy;
- Assisting in the creation and formation of the newly introduced Impact Assessment Review Panels which looks to strengthen impact assessments for the benefit of the community and its residents. This had included amending the Cabinet and committee reporting style to reflect the introduction of the Socio-economic Duty as well as the Welsh Language Standards;
- The work of the Diversity in Democracy Working Group and the Council's support of the diversity declaration to encourage a more diverse Council;
- The production of a draft Memorandum of Understanding which supports an intended outcome of demonstrating a mutual respect to other people with varying political opinions and a show of working together for the benefit of its communities, following the work of the Diversity in Democracy Working Group;
- Changes taken forward in the Council Chamber ensuring improvements to accessibility including dropping the kerb outside the Chamber and ramps to the top table within the Chamber.

Education & Inclusion Service

Support for Vulnerable Learners

During lockdown periods, close working relationships with Children's Services allowed us to provide hub placements for vulnerable pupils, with daily attendance monitoring to ensure support could be implemented as swiftly as possible where families were not taking up placements.

Education and Children's Services worked collaboratively to implement a Vulnerable Learner Protocol to ensure that the most vulnerable learners and families received a high level of contact in terms of safeguarding, well-being and continuity of learning. The Vulnerable Learner Protocol was used for the school closure period and the 3-week phased return to schools at the end of the summer period.

During the COVID-19 period of school closure 22,138 contacts were made with 1,970 individuals. Following implementation of the Vulnerable Learner Protocol (between 1st May and the end of the summer term), 132 referrals were made to the Attendance and Well-being Service (AWS) for collaborative action, of which 124 were successfully contacted by RCT officers with 8 resulting in 101 police welfare checks. An additional 4 pupils during this time were reported as 'Children Missing Education' with successful contact established.

This work informed changes to service delivery implemented during the autumn term 2020/21 for continued collaboration and improved data sharing between Council services and schools. This included regular Well-being Response visits by AWS (all settings on a rota every 3 days) and emergency visits for child protection pupils not sighted for 24 hours. This led to over 10,000 visits in the academic year, with referrals being made from these visits to counselling support, Youth Engagement and Participation Service and Resilient Families Services as part of the Integrated Well-being Pathway.

Data for vulnerable groups are now routinely provided by Education and Children's Services and suggests that there has not been a significant growth in the number of vulnerable learners.

Month	Care and Support Plan	Children Looked After	Child Protection	Young Carer	Statemented
Jun 20	651	398	295	112	1262
Sep 20	661	403	272	117	1263
Jan 21	648	406	290	114	1320

Pupils with Complex Health and Medical Needs

During the pandemic the Access and Inclusion Service (A&IS) held termly meetings with Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board to discuss pupils with significant medical and health needs to ensure they were able to access school safely. Reasonable adjustments with enhanced risk assessments were put in place ensuring that pupils with the most complex medical needs were able to access specialist provision.

Specialist advice was provided to schools to write individual risk assessments for pupils with complex health and medical needs. Exemplar risk assessments were drafted for primary and secondary school settings to support their development. Operational guidance for schools is routinely updated to ensure this adequately reflects the current position for the most vulnerable learners.

Safeguarding

The Safeguarding Policy for schools is updated annually and is approved by the Safeguarding Board. Operation Encompass continues to provide early notification to schools of domestic violence incidents in the children's family homes to promote effective support and intervention.

Barriers to Attendance

We were aware from the attendance during summer term 2019/20 that absence figures would rise significantly due to the pandemic and without statutory instruments (prosecutions/fixed penalty notices for non-school attendance), that the AWS approach needed to change. The Education Psychology Service (EPS) undertook training with Headteachers and AWS staff in the summer term 2020 to assess the impact of COVID-19 on families and staff and how to approach support for families. This learning has helped schools and AWS to support families in re-engaging with school.

Staff have also been encouraged to focus on the positives for education and determine where needs and gaps exist within the resources of families to ensure barriers to attendance are removed.

Well-being Response visits as part of an Integrated Well-being Pathway with Children's Services were introduced in September 2020, providing an increased presence in communities to reassure parents of the measures settings have taken, to make them safe. The Integrated Well-being Pathway works in conjunction with YEPS, RFS, EPS and Eye 2 Eye Counselling Services and continues to operate into the 2021/22 academic year. Schools can refer to AWS for Well-being Response visits which involve a door-knocking service to families where learners are absent. Schools are prioritising vulnerable children for these visits alongside the support they are already offering. All settings were part of a 3-day rota for Well-being Response Visits to ascertain well-being needs and ensure effective safeguarding of pupils and their families as well as

encouraging learners to re-engage in education. During the last academic year, over 10,000 visits were made to ensure effective safeguarding and pupil/family support was in place.

AWS has operated Phase 1 of a revised service delivery model to enhance direct contact with families in need of support due to anxiety about returning to school. This approach is incorporating the YEPS pre-counselling support initiative as part of a collaborative approach to supporting learner well-being along an Integrated Well-being Pathway. In spring term 2021, a survey was undertaken with schools, 111 of 115 schools responded. 82% rated the current quality of AWS as either 'Good' or 'Very Good' with 91% stating they believe the current way of working had improved relationships with AWS; 86% stating the AWS process had helped sight vulnerable pupils who were not attending; and 72% believing the process had increased parental engagement.

Support for Well-being

The 2020/21 Well-being Action Plan, which was supported by a Welsh Government (WG) grant of £120,755 has been implemented and evaluated, demonstrating a positive impact upon building the capacity of schools to meet the emotional and mental health and well-being needs of learners.

The Educational Psychology Service and Children's Services have undertaken training in the trauma recovery model to provide enhanced case management approaches to support professionals to respond to our most vulnerable Children Looked After (CLA) pupils. Children's Services are monitoring the impact of this approach through the residential children's homes, and this will inform future practice.

Temporary Assistant Educational Psychologists provided additional support to pupils/families in Ty Gwyn in relation to well-being within a trauma informed approach. They supported the strategic development of therapeutic approaches within the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). All staff within the PRU have now undertaken training in Trauma Informed Approaches, with 4 undertaking diploma training.

A range of courses including emotion coaching training, mental health and well-being training has been delivered across our schools.

A number of multi-agency working groups have been established including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, LGBTQ+ and Parents, Pupils, Staff Well-being Group for schools.

Data for exclusions and bullying as a result of racial incidents

Data for exclusions and bullying as a result of racial incidents shows that there were no permanent exclusions due to racial incidents over the last 3 academic years. However,

data relating to fixed term exclusions and bullying incidents demonstrates an increase in the percentage of racial incidents between 2018/19 and 2020/21.

	Racial Incidents			
Year	Fixed Term Exclusions	Percentage of Exclusions	Incidents of Bullying	Percentage of Bullying
2018/2019	20	0.74	20	5.33
2019/2020	10	0.67	4	2.94
2020/2021	20	1.40	9	7.20

The established Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic working group have conducted qualitative research into the lived experiences of Black pupils in RCT aged 13-18. This has identified key themes and priorities for us regarding racial equality in our schools.

Ongoing work is taking place with Stonewall Cymru relating to LGBTQ + awareness and support for schools. This work is now supported by an Assistant Educational Psychologist and will be evaluated to identify future priorities.

An EPS helpline was established during the pandemic. Following the positive feedback from schools, partners and parents, the EPS telephone line continues to form a central part of the EPS Service Delivery Model with 88 calls taking place between September and November 2021.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) Provision

We have invested in support for learners with significant social, emotional and behavioural needs. In addition to our provision in our special schools and PRUs, provision has been established in 10 secondary/through schools for Key stage 3/4 pupils.

We have modified our service delivery to maintain our statutory duties in relation to SEN, including virtual Annual Reviews and Access & Inclusion Panels. Effective liaison between Headteachers and Learner Support Service ensured continuous review of staffing capacity in Learner Support Classes (LSCs). No LSCs have been forced to close due to issues with staffing capacity throughout COVID-19 restrictions and staff were effectively deployed during lockdown.

To ensure families that have a child with a disability or additional support needs can fully benefit from family support interventions the RFS has a dedicated Children with Additional Needs Service (CANS). The service aims to improve their resilience levels with a focus on supporting families where the physical, learning or neurodevelopmental needs of a child within the family is impacting on family life to better understand any additional support needs and improve the relationships within the family. Without the constraints of threshold criteria the CANS Team are able to ensure those families most in

need are appropriately supported. The CANS Team supported 284 families during 2020/21.

Legal Services

Our Elections Team have worked to engage newly enfranchised voters (16–17 year olds) through promotion of a social media campaign and ongoing initiatives as part of Welsh Government's electoral reform agenda.

Prosperity and Development

The Housing Strategy and Investment Team ensures that the service they provide is inclusive, equal and fair for all service users.

All grant application processes are offered online however the service also worked with the Council's Diversity and Inclusion Team during 2020/21 in order to improve the online grant application process, ensuring that service users who require reasonable adjustments in order to complete the online application can access this support.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Feedback

The Housing Grants Department have engaged with 669 clients during 2020/21 in order to gain their views on the Disabled Facilities Grant they received from the Council. The following responses were collated from the applicants following the adaptations made to their home:

- 96% of applicants agreed that they were able to do things they couldn't before and feel more confident and independent;
- 97% of applicants agreed that after the adaptation was completed, it is now easier for their family/Carer to help with their daily needs;
- 99% of applicants agreed that their quality of life had improved;
- 98% of applicants were satisfied with the adaptation they had received.

Overall, the feedback received from applicants is very positive regarding the adaptations they received through the grant. The way in which this information is collated is currently through telephone calls however the service is reviewing this method and will be piloting an online feedback form in 2021/22 (however surveys over the telephone can still be made if required).

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 2020/21 there were 249 bookings made through the service using 28 languages and BSL interpreters.

The five most requested languages during 2020/21 were Arabic, Romanian, Mandarin, Urdu and Polish.

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 ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has brought challenges for public engagement and consultation. In Rhondda Cynon Taf we have developed a very successful face-to-face approach with residents and other stakeholders in recent years and we have had to develop a 'digital by default' approach in 2020 which continued into 2021. Face-to-face engagement with residents has been limited but we are hoping to bring back this approach going forward.

The approach we have used in 2021 continued the positive work by ensuring that all residents and service users had every opportunity to provide feedback. The 2021/22 budget consultation, for example used a 'digital by default' approach, whilst continuing to consider hard to reach groups, those having reduced or no access to the internet and those who prefer to engage through traditional methods.

In 2021 we introduced 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.

We started a conversation on Climate Change by setting up [Let's Talk Climate Change RCT | Let's Talk RCTCBC](#) and used a wide variety of tools to engage with members of the public including a survey, ideas, stories, quick polls and places (mapping tool). The new Let's Talk Engagement website supports the work of the Climate Change Steering Group and the results of this engagement have informed the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

Since introducing the website in 2021, we have engaged on a variety of projects including:

- Let's Talk Local Development Plan
- Let's Talk Welsh Language
- Let's Talk Armed Forces
- Let's Talk Wildflowers
- Let's Talk Electric Vehicle Charging
- Let's Talk Climate Change RCT.

During 2021, we supported or managed 66 engagement activities/consultations and supported a number of Budget and Climate Change face-to-face engagement events.

In 2021/22 the team will support the revised Impact Assessment process with the appointment of a new Community Data Analyst Officer, linking with the data requirements of equality and Welsh language impact assessments. The role also allows for the interpretation of statistical evidence to support services across the Council in their decision making.

Examples of how residents and communities have been involved in the Council's work in 2021 include:

- Engaging with over 1,000 residents on our budget consultation;
- Engaging with Schools and young people via Instagram;
- Consultation on a Welsh Language Strategy, where we held 3 public face-to-face engagement events in Libraries across Rhondda Cynon Taf. Members of the public were able to share their views on how to support the Welsh Language and suggest any additions or general comments;
- Continued engagement and involvement with residents and communities in matters that affect them so that their voices are heard in Council decisions;
- We supported Schools Consultations;
- 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 OPAG to support and engage with older people in RCT. During the pandemic this allowed older people to keep in touch with members through regular newsletters and information provision;
- We have linked in with the Council's Disability Forum in discussions and ongoing surveys;
- Considered a review of our Citizens' Panel and linking in with the Let's Talk Site to manage and promote consultations with registered users;
- 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 online and social media engagement as one of our methods to obtain resident views and promote consultations.

All consultation and engagement documents are available in the Welsh language. We have an excellent working relationship with the Council's Welsh Language department as we translate the vast majority of the work we undertake. We also assist the Welsh Language department with their own consultations. The department continues to support staff members who want to learn Welsh to help them converse with Welsh speakers at the various engagements we deliver.

We have introduced a new question to be used in surveys, to assess the impact that any change will have on the Welsh language or Welsh speakers, which is in line with the requirements of the Welsh Language Act.

At 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 have introduced a new question for service change consultations that allows the Council to assess the impact of any changes on a number of protected characteristics. We have also introduced Easy Read versions of all service change consultations, working with Learning Disability Wales.

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. The full engagement report can be found [here](#).

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 2019/20 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 are 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 Groups

The Community Cohesion Team continued to work closely with Valleys Ethnic Minority Support, whose members come from many different countries and have a wide ethnic diversity. The group works to overcome barriers to accessing local services, training and employment. Unfortunately, many groups stopped meeting during the pandemic, while others continued to do so virtually where possible. Many attempts were made to contact Project Unity (support for those who identify as LGBTQ+) for example, but we later found out that the charity had ceased operating during the pandemic. Unfortunately this was a common theme amongst many community groups during this time. The Cohesion Team continued to work with the Older People's Advisory Groups to better understand the barriers that they face.

Disability Forum

It has been a challenge to hold fully accessible meetings with members of the Disability Forum during the pandemic due to members being digitally excluded and/or the

suitability of digital platforms. Telephone contact has been maintained with all members to discuss any concerns they have and to discuss their well-being.

European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS)

During the initial pandemic (lockdown of March - late July 2020) Council officers could only signpost local residents wishing to apply for pre-settled or settled status to the EUSS via phone calls. After the lifting of restrictions the Community Cohesion Officer attended licenced premises in RCT with Council Licencing Officers to re-enforce the message to any EU nationals that they still had time to apply to the scheme up until 31 December 2020. Out of the 19 premises visited, all the staff had already been granted status or were in the process of applying. Throughout October and November 2020, the Community Cohesion Officer worked closely with Citizens Advice Newport to identify work places that may still have employees needing to apply. In early December 2020 information was provided to Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board advising of employees who still needed to apply to remain in the UK after the Brexit deadline.

Safeguarding Week

The Community Cohesion Team assisted South Wales Police in Operation BETSY across Cwm Taf, which was part of the Keep Safe Cymru Card Scheme. The aim of the operation was to identify people who may be vulnerable due to memory loss and who may not be known to services 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 and provide them with information in relation to crime prevention.

Town Centre Engagement

Community Cohesion Officers and South Wales Police officers engaged with the general public in town centres throughout National Hate Crime Awareness Week. Officers encouraged conversations 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.

Veterans

We have continued to develop our engagement with veterans across the borough. After successfully gaining funding from the Armed Forces Covenant we launched the Veteran Advice Service across Cwm Taf in April 2019. The service covers a range of areas, including benefits, adult social care, finances, employment and housing. Since the service launched in April 2019 the service has received over 900 referrals to date. 91% of veterans accessing our service are male, 72% had served in the British Army and 64%

are aged 51 to 80 years old. In addition to Council support, we have been successful in referring veterans to many organisations including: Veterans NHS Wales, Royal British Legion, Admiral Nurses, RNID and many more.

We have built on our support to local veteran groups across Rhondda Cynon Taf. Our Armed Forces Liaison Officer attends veteran groups to provide advice and support and has been successful in establishing 2 new veterans groups, the Taff Ely Group in Rhydyfelin and the Darran Las Veteran Group in Mountain Ash, in addition to the existing support provided to Valleys Veterans in Ton Pentre.

We had a successful bid for funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust 'Forces for Change Programme' and have been able to deliver our Veterans Connected project throughout the pandemic. Through this project, veterans can hire a mobile tablet at any time, free-of-charge, through the Council's Armed Forces Veterans Service. This project enables veterans to stay in touch with family and friends with an overall aim of reducing social isolation. Training is provided to help veterans get connected and stay safe online.

In 2021/22 we will look to implement a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for veterans and reservists. This additional commitment demonstrates the Council's support for the Armed Forces Community and honours the spirit of the Armed Forces. The Guaranteed Interview Scheme is to guarantee an interview to veterans and reservists that meet the essential criteria set out in the job profile for roles that are advertised. The Council recognises that members of the Armed Forces Community can bring valuable transferable skills, qualities, and benefits.

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 Council's Community Cohesion Team in 2020/21.

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

Following WG Guidance in December 2019, the priorities during 2020/21 which informed our Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) and Legacy delivery plans were to engage with specific customer groups. The aim was to meet the WG target of supporting 20% of people into employment who have a work limiting health condition or disability. We achieved 17% at year end with the actual number of 60 exceeding the target number of 50 due to engagement numbers exceeding the target set. Other priority customer groups were refugees, minority ethnic clients and ex-offenders. We reviewed the way we collected and recorded the equalities information for CfW+ and also gave guidance to

staff around ongoing recording of clients disclosures of having a work limiting health conditions and disability.

Due to the pandemic, all our employment support staff were re-deployed for 6 months to community hub work, offering support to vulnerable people in RCT with shopping, picking up prescriptions etc. and the ongoing restrictions did impact on us being able to make progress against this agenda.

However, these customer groups continue to be prioritised during 2020/21 with more progress being made.

Young People

We have opened our CfW+ programme to 16-24 year olds across RCT who were unable to receive employment support from any other ESF grant funded programme or through RCT's Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS). Previously, CfW+ prioritised adult that re 25+ due to the low level of NEETs in RCT and the amount of support that was already available. However, due to the pandemic, the number of young people being referred from DWP for mentoring support increased so we increased the support on offer through CfW+ which included access to our training programmes as well.

Numbers of young people being referred onto our CfW mentoring programme also increased which has meant that we've exceeded our lifetime targets set for the programme.

We applied to become a Kickstart Gateway on behalf of the Council during March 2021 and we have successfully implemented the initiative in RCT. The scheme offers funding to businesses to provide six month paid work placements to young people claiming Universal Credit, for 25 hours a week at minimum wage. As well as providing training, the scheme should also provide practical support for the young person to search for alternative employment before the placement ends.

Ethnic Minorities

We attracted low numbers of clients from minority ethnic groups with 93% of participants identifying as White British, however participants continue to be supported by our employment support programmes. We will continue to work on attracting more ethnic minority people to the programmes.

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

The 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, distances services and digital services;
- information on physical environment, air quality and neighbourhood classifications.

So there is a good understanding from the data of the differences between each library area. Use is also made of geographic information available about the level of Welsh speakers in various parts of the borough.

In addition to the above, the service profiles visitor numbers, book issues, downloads, attendance at events at each library as part of their performance meetings with branches and of course listens to feedback from staff and customers.

Evidently the pandemic has had a major impact on areas of delivery as footfall continues to be much lower than it was previously but the development of community hubs which was expanded during this period and the establishment of Neighbourhood Networks has provided more information to the service about local priorities.

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 the social housing grant (SHG). The service continues to apply this method in order to tackle the demand for housing among disabled people, which will allow them a stable home to enable them to thrive regardless of the barriers they may face. A full review of the LHMA will be completed by March 2022.

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 Housing Strategy and Investment Service are in the process of remodelling the Homestep application process, in line with the Department's digitisation of services agenda. It is within this process that the service plans will include questions in respect of young disabled people accessing open market housing that is affordable for them in line with the affordability test carried out at the application stage.

Action 7 - Improve and develop the collection and recording of customer equality monitoring information across Council service areas.

A comprehensive monitoring toolkit has been developed after compiling best practice examples. The new form reflects current best practice wording, question ordering and response options and takes into consideration GDPR requirements.

Unfortunately due to the pandemic the intended pilot in Leisure Services was unable to commence. We have however worked with individual service areas to improve their own data monitoring.

Equality monitoring data relating to people with protected characteristics is captured by our Community Services directorate as part of:

- NHS Clinically Extremely Vulnerable list;
- Enrolment forms and uploaded to the Capita and EBS systems;
- The equality monitoring section of Customer Satisfaction Surveys;
- Theatre booking systems;
- Employment Support programme delivery.

The data is reported to Welsh Government and forms part of their analysis in relation to whether the grant funding has been used in line with programme requirements.

More use is now being made of data to analyse resident needs and to assess demand for services than was previously the case.

We intend to launch the Equality Monitoring Toolkit across the Council in 2021/22.

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 Housing Allocation scheme was due to be reviewed and updated in 2020/21, however the pandemic prevented this work from commencing. It is now scheduled to take place throughout 2022/23 and part of the process will involve focus groups with individuals who have applied to Homefinder to understand their experiences. Adapted housing for individuals with disabilities will be extensively reviewed as there has been an increase in the number of applicants who require adapted properties in RCT.

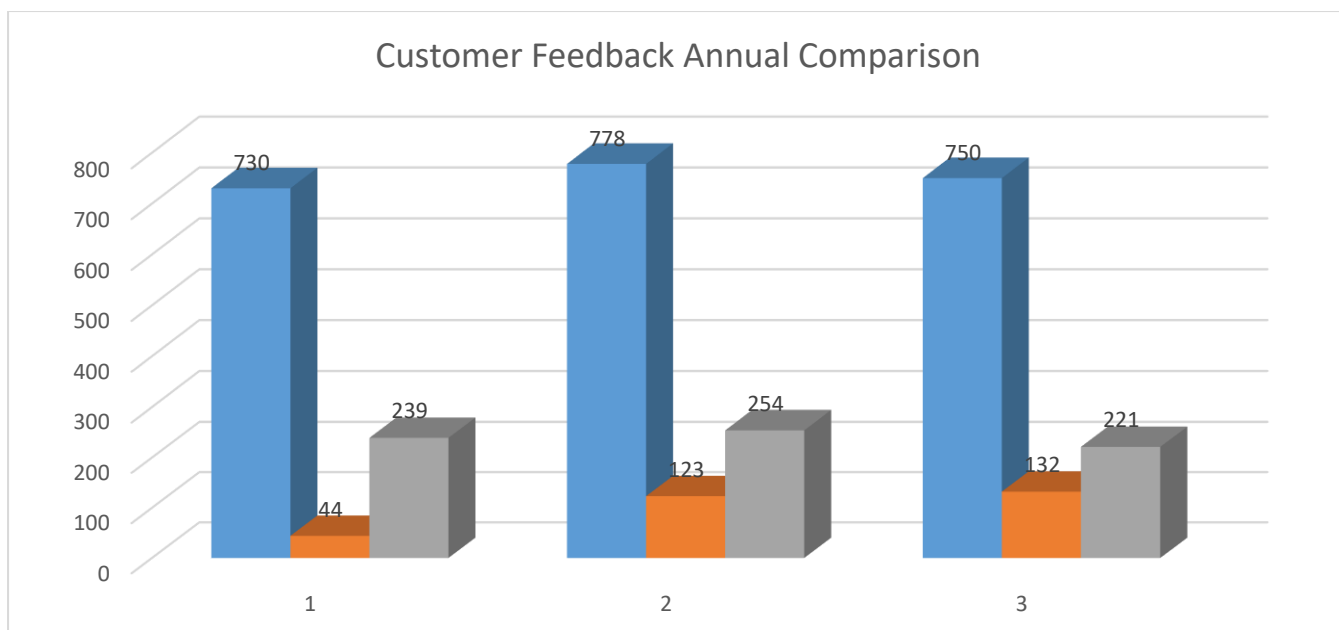
During 2021 many of the Housing Allocation Team have attended training to understand individual needs ranging from unconscious bias, domestic abuse awareness, protection of vulnerable adults, suicide prevention and mental health awareness.

Action 9 - Improve and develop monitoring of customer complaints.

This period has been a significantly challenging and unprecedented time for the Council in having to both deploy services specifically in response to flooding and the pandemic and to manage longer term initiatives to support communities and businesses across RCT. New ways of working have been introduced across all service areas with staff working from home and as a result, some of the development planned for the Customer Feedback Service has been delayed while the delivery of community support and front-line services has been prioritised.

Service areas and Complaints Co-ordinators have throughout the period and despite the presented challenges, continued to effectively manage customer contacts and complaints with some service areas noted to have made improvements to the consistency of complaint recording and for the second year reducing the number of complaints remaining open at the 6 month period from 2.4% in 2019/20 to 2.2% in 2020/21. 61% of complaints were dealt with in 10 working days compared to 56% in 2019/20. Whilst this may be a small improvement all service areas should be recognised for continuing to effectively manage complaints and customers' expectations as well as make improvements through what has been a difficult year.

Key Themes for Customer Feedback



	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
• Complaints	730	778	750
• Comments	44	123	132
• Compliments	239	254	221
TOTAL	1013	1155	1103

A total of 1103 feedback items were logged for 2020/21. This number is consistent with the previous 2 years, however overall contacts to the Council significantly decreased during this period and this along with closed services may have affected the level of feedback received.

Customer feedback through the Council's website remains the preferred option for customers to communicate with 66% of feedback received through this channel. E-mail communication increased from 8.5% in 2019/20 to 20% and this significant rise can be attributed to COVID-19 restrictions and calls in to the contact centre being unavailable for a period of time.

37% of feedback items were not allocated to a queue at the point of reporting. These are cases which have been incorrectly allocated and are in the main complaints for Frontline Services. This is an increase on the figure for 2019/20 and may be attributable to the redeployment of key staff to other positions. It is hoped that the return of staff to their key posts and the development of a new record management system will offer greater flexibility and improve the allocation of feedback items after its implementation.

EXAMPLES OF COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Complaint area	Complaint detail	Service Improvement
Cemeteries	Complaint about appearance of cemetery staff.	This element of complaint was upheld and staff provided with new uniforms.
Contact Centre	Complaint regarding advice given by advisor on how to make a complaint.	Training for all contact advisors on complaints to be scheduled for 2021/22.
Leisure	Complaint about lack of classes in the Rhondda area.	Class programme to be reviewed and increased – achieved October 2020.
Refuse and recycling	Disabled lady unable to access steps to/from house as waste collections blocking access.	Crew advised and alternative collection point to be arranged.
Parks maintenance	Complaint about condition of park following grass cutting. Grass was cut during inappropriate ground conditions resulting in surface mud.	All staff reminded of their training and the need to ensure there is a site inspection to determine suitability of works being carried out.
Transportation	Complaint regarding inappropriate position of bus stop and no consultation with residents affected.	Bus stop signage removed and new location to be found subject to wider consultation.

Currently there is a new system being implemented for all customer complaints and we are reviewing the old system and making improvements to ensure we are collecting the information we require to drive improvements. This includes analysing complaints that relate to equality issues which are reported on separately along with Welsh Language complaints.

Action 10 - Improve local access to information advice and assistance provision for children, young people and families to promote their participation and engagement.

In March 2020, the **Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS)** suspended all face-to-face work with young people and colleagues, as a direct result of the country entering lockdown. The situation required transforming the service's delivery methods almost overnight; virtual platforms were the only option for the first few months of the pandemic, a preferred method of communication for many young people.

The YEPS staff's previous engagement in service innovation and their confidence to use their expertise and knowledge of the needs of young people resulted in a comprehensive virtual youth offer of both targeted and universal services to assist young people to process and manage their situation.

Transforming service delivery methods required the active engagement of staff across the service to effect cultural change, supported by managers who were confident to let staff take measured risks. Focusing on service users, the team was tasked to assess needs and identify requirements, which were then used to reallocate resources and develop contingency plans. Their previous engagement in service innovation and their confidence to use their expertise and knowledge of the needs of young people resulted in a virtual youth work offer available within 72 hours of lockdown commencing. Service data demonstrates significant levels of online engagement with users in addition to the 1:1 support for over 1000 young people delivered remotely.

The service realigned its online offer, with a significant increase in the volume of information, advice and guidance, as well as universal activities available to young people via the website (www.wicid.tv) and social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube). The comprehensive offer was delivered by YEPS with significant contributions from delivery partners, including sexual health teams, substance misuse organisations, and commissioned providers.

The **Family Information Service (FIS)** played a key role in disseminating information to service users and families during the pandemic. It was the main conduit for the Resilient Families Service Parenting Team and the Talk and Play Team to connect with families and provide information, advice and assistance. The FIS made use of social media to notify parents of information to support them to access a range of services including childcare, play scheme timetables, parenting programmes. This contact with residents was central to the service's ability to maintain engagement with children, young people, parents and families during lockdown. The FIS social media platform played a critical role in enabling us to notify

parents and carers of changes to childcare arrangements, availability of Children and Family Centres and sources of advice and support. It also enabled us to deliver virtual parenting and speech and language support and well as engage children in virtual play opportunities. Our social media platforms were also used to ensure consistent messages were delivered to the public in terms of COVID-19 restrictions, school closures, home to school transport, testing centres to support the priorities of other Council Services such as Test, Trace and Protect, Transport and Education.

Analysis of the online traffic across social media channels during the pandemic showed a significant engagement in online support:

Between April 20 – September 20

- Online parenting videos - 38,523 views / 32,690 unique viewers
- Online early language videos - 44,287 views / 36,040 unique viewers

Changes to the delivery of the FIS were made in 2020/21 including securing agreement from the Chief Executive for the development of the **RCT Families website**, which will encompass the Council's statutory duty to deliver information, advice and assistance through an easy access single portal. The website is due to be launched in Spring 2022. This supports the principles of the Social Services and Well-being Act in empowering service users to use tools provided to meet their own needs.

During the pandemic, the three **Children and Family Centres** were repurposed for both staff and service user use. The sites were used to meet with service users when home visits were not feasible. This allowed key meetings to be held in a Covid-19 safe environment where virtual communication methods would not have been meaningful or would not have reduced the risk to a family/child. In addition, the service was able to maintain statutory duties such as contact centre visits, deliver emergency childcare, support frontline staff working during the pandemic from the safety of the centres.

YEPS has been proactive in **consulting with young people** throughout the pandemic. From seeking opinions during 1:1 sessions to surveys on social media platforms, YEPS staff have been committed to listening to young people to inform service developments.

The **County Youth Forum** was suspended during 2020/21 as a result of the pandemic, however, the locality fora were able to temporarily transition into meaningful consultation and participation events to inform recovery planning. Officers worked to transfer the physical local youth fora into online sessions. The three local youth fora have met 8 times to discuss the concerns young people have

as a result of COVID-19 and the support they would like to see implemented as part of the service's recovery plan. In addition, the fora met with, discussed and contributed towards:

- Votes@16 campaign #yepsisthisyourfirsttime
- Police and Crime Commissioner's "Young Voice Conversation" and the development of their young people's website
- Safer Wales "Champions of Wales" project
- Jigsaw Project, looking at how girls and women have been impacted by COVID-19
- Poetry Project, to create a series of short poems to change the negative views of young people within their wider community.

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 are outlined below:

Action 1 - A comprehensive review of the recruitment and selection process to increase the diversity of applicants.

A corporate recruitment improvement action plan has been developed with the aim of making our processes more accessible and attractive to job applicants from all backgrounds. The action plan covers the following areas:

- job analysis and job design
- advertising
- applications and selection
- appointment and induction
- alternative recruitment processes
- communication and training
- monitoring and evaluation.

Unfortunately there have been delays with this work, initially due to the pandemic with many key staff being redeployed to help with community support, followed by the implementation of a new HR/Payroll system which has been the priority. In 2020/21 we will be appointing a Graduate Officer to work on areas of this project.

Action 2 - 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 provides a position statement on the current services provided or enabled by the Council in relation to adapted housing and the provision of adaptations. The draft RCT Adapted Housing Review makes a number of recommendations aimed at increasing the supply of adapted and accessible homes being built across all tenures. This includes exploring opportunities for the provision of adapted accommodation on Council owned land. This involves working closely with private developers to understand the barriers that exist in developing adapted bungalows on private housing developments and the implementation of new Supplementary Planning Guidance which will require a certain amount of private housing to be adapted or accessible. The review also recommends setting a local target for the number of adapted houses built per annum in the borough, as well as requesting Low Cost Home Ownership bungalows as part of the affordable housing contribution. The RCT Adapted Housing Review will be completed by the end of March 2022.

Action 3 - 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.

Our Staying Well at Work (formally Develop Invest & Grow) project is part funded by the European Social Fund and aims to provide support to small businesses and their employees. The support is offered at no cost and focusses on a bespoke range of products to improve employee health and well-being and provide support to businesses to manage employees with disabilities/work limiting health conditions.

The outcomes delivered

Over the course of the project, to the end of the period 100 Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) participants have enrolled with the project, 78 have been through internal compliance checks and are eligible for the project, 22 have been compliance rejected and are therefore ineligible for the project.

78 SME's received direct support from the project up until 31 March 2021, to encourage a cultural change in organisations towards a more diverse and healthy workforce and the adoption of flexible working practices.

Shown in the chart (Table 1a) are the activities undertaken with SME's that have been through internal compliance checks and adopted or improved their strategies and/or monitoring systems.

56 have completed the project and recorded outcomes against the project indicators, 14 were early leavers, and 22 are still actively engaged in the project.

Table 1a

Outcome	Participants
01.Adopt HR H&S Policy for A&W	24
02.Absence Management Policy	25
03.Equality & Diversity Policy	25
04.Sys to Support Flexibility	3
05.Assessment to Monitor H&W	5
06.Pol / Proc Support H&W	23
07.Monitor Work on Health	2
08.Training to Support A&W	9
Early Leaver	14
No Outcome Recorded Yet	22
Total	78

Employee Participant Activity

Over the course of the project, to 31 March 2021, 301 employee participants have enrolled with the project.

359 employee participants have engaged with the project to date. Of those, internal verification checks have been carried out on 318 employee participants who have completed their engagement, 146 have returned to work, 79 have remained in work. Of the 101 early leavers, in the main intervention took place and participants returned to work or remained in work but failed to complete closure project paperwork. The reasons for referral are detailed below in Table 1b and a breakdown of the outcomes recorded are detailed below in Table 1c.

Employee participants 18% declared a disability and 82% a work limiting health condition.

Table 1b Reason for Referral

Reason	%	Participants
In Work Support	25%	76
Support RTW. to Work -28 Days	17%	50
Support Ret. to Work 28 Days+	58%	175
Total	100%	301

Table 1c Outcome

Outcome	%	Participants
Early Leaver	30%	89
NO-RTW 4 wks after completion	6%	19
Remained in Work	17%	52
RTW - Different	1%	2
RTW - Same	45%	136
RTW 4 wks after completion	1%	3
Total	100%	301

Table 1d Characteristic Summary

Participant Breakdown	2020/2021 Cumulative Total	
	Total	%
Disabled/Disability	57	17.9%
Work Limiting Condition (Includes MSD & MH)	261	82.1%
Female	247	77.7%
Male	71	22.3%
Care / Child Responsibilities	91	28.6%
Over 54	124	39.0%
Migrant / Non EU	0	0.0%
BME	2	0.6%
Total Referrals	318	100.0%

Action 4 - 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.

We offer multi-channel access to information and Council services. This is provided via a range of formats and facilities including:

- Text Phone/Sensory Support Line number promoted via our website
- BSL Interpreters available to attend One4aLL appointments
- Hearing loop systems in place at One4aLL appointment desks
- Enquiries received via the Text Relay Service
- Material available in alternative formats e.g. application forms, consultation documents
- Browsealoud available on our website providing accessibility tools such as:
 - Text to speech (read aloud)
 - Screen mask
 - Text magnifier

- Web page simplifier
- MP3 maker (convert online content to audio)
- Picture dictionary.

During 2020/21 work continued towards meeting Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 web accessibility standards.

Action 5 - Undertake development of the use of assistive technology within the Digital Strategy.

We have continued to provide opportunities for people within our communities and organisation to develop their digital competency, confidence and where necessary provide access to assisted digital support, so that they are better equipped to access and use technology productively.

Those impacted by the pandemic were supported through ICT & Digital for example:

- Working with our partners we supported the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board with a digital solution to manage the vaccination programmes and provided contact centre services.
- Enablement of a Digital Solution to provide a platform to deliver Shielding Support to our community via WCCIS and Web.
- Putting in place a more joined up way for businesses to apply and provide evidence for COVID-19 business grants. By putting the applications and the other grant requirements online in the same process, we were able to make quicker decisions and speedy payments to RCT businesses. We dealt with over 10,000 grant applications and paid out approximately £66 million in grants.
- As part of the Welsh Government's ['Hwb' digital Transformation Project](#), we made sure that every school was able to deliver the requirements for digital skills at the heart of the new curriculum through installing new IT systems. In addition, we worked closely with schools to provide over 5,500 laptops, tablets and Wi-Fi access to learners without home access during the pandemic.
- As part of the Council's Digital Strategy 2017-20 work was continually undertaken to support the inclusion agenda, with ICT & Digital playing a key role in supporting key initiatives such as ['Digital Fridays'](#) and [Get online in RCT](#) across our libraries and with services for the housebound.
- To support access to digital inclusion, FREE Public Wi-Fi is provided at approximately 90 Council and community buildings and also at our key [Town Centres](#). Public access PCs are available at several locations such as Libraries, Leisure & Community Centres. All PCs within Libraries will be refreshed with new devices during 2021.

- Our website incorporates elements that support those with visual impairment, content is scanned for errors and reports produced to facilitate their correction. Work to ensure the website meets accessibility [WCAG 2.1 AA compliance](#) continues. Our website accessibility rating has been increased from 68% to 86% on our Corporate Web presence.
- Contact Centre Advisor Services are accessible to customers.

Action 6 - To strengthen existing Homefinder processes to take into account equality and diversity best practice.

This will form part of the Housing Allocation Scheme review as the operational practices will also be reviewed to ensure that they align with the requirements of the scheme.

In 2020/21 a representative from Homefinder attended the Disability Forum to learn about the challenges facing individuals in the area.

Homefinder commenced 'surgeries' in Aberdare Library once a week. The focus was on providing a face-to-face service for individuals wishing to make enquiries directly with an advisor in an accessible space. The aim was to expand this service across the borough, however the pandemic sadly closed many of the offices for a time. We do hope to reintroduce this service when restrictions allow.

Not part of the Homefinder process, but of benefit for the Homefinder Team was the privilege of working with a young person with additional needs from Coleg Y Cymoedd on day placement one afternoon a week. The young person worked as part of the team and gained work experience and independence and the team gained an understanding of the challenges that this young person faced in his daily life.

Action 7 - To further develop an inclusive approach to apprenticeships.

We offer an award winning **apprecenticeship scheme**. We have adapted and changed our apprentice assessments to incorporate a 2 level approach, giving equal opportunities to individuals with differing learning needs and in line with the post they are applying for. As a result we have recruited a number of apprentices with additional needs.

Our partnership programme with Coleg y Cymoedd, Elite and Learning Disability Wales has been working with the learners from the **Gateway to Employment 2020** and 2021 cohort. We have delivered a range of employability skills but due to the constraints of the pandemic these have mostly been delivered online. The programme aims to give the learners that are in their last academic year at College a

real insight into future career opportunities; this has been achieved by facilitating visits from employers and undertaking work placements.

Harry from the Gateway to Employment cohort 2020 secured an Apprenticeship with Vision Products at RCT Council and was awarded Gateway to Employment Intern of Year at Employment, Education and Training Team Celebration Event in 2021. You can watch Harry's story at

[Gateway to Employment, Supported Intern of the Year 2021 - YouTube](#)

Action 8 - Strengthen the scrutiny process for the Equality Impact Assessment process.

The Equality Impact Assessment documentation was reviewed to take into account the requirements of the Socio-economic Duty. As part of this review there was an opportunity to strengthen both the Equality Impact Assessment and Welsh Language Impact Assessment. A combined approach was taken to relaunch the impact assessment guidance. In addition a new process 'The Review Panel' was established to strengthen the scrutiny of completed impact assessments. Senior officers from across the Council sit on the Review Panel to review the impact assessment, checking that relevant data and evidence have been used to inform decision making. Agreement has been obtained to recruit a data analyst to support sourcing the relevant evidence for impact assessment documentation. The Cabinet reporting framework has also been enhanced to improve scrutiny of impact assessments.

A number of awareness raising sessions have been held with service areas to outline the requirements of equality duties and Welsh Language standards. The Review Panel was launched in April 2021, therefore progress will be reported in next year's report.

Action 9 - Encourage the uptake of Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement through reviewing service delivery models and an effective marketing strategy.

The 21st Century School Modernisation Programme has included the redesign of secondary school kitchens and dining halls to improve the dining experience and promote learner engagement and attendance. Evidence suggests the investment in school facilities is having a significant impact on the take up of school meals. Planning work has started on the Universal Primary Free School Meal implementation. Catering services are currently reviewing the existing meal provision in each of our primary and special schools and assessing the kitchen equipment and storage facilities in order to estimate the increase in meal numbers and the additional requirements for staff, equipment, storage and dining hall space.

Breakfast service is operational in the majority of secondary schools in order to encourage all pupils to eat a healthy breakfast and help promote early arrival in schools. Pupils FSM allowance is updated at the start of each school day to enable them to access this service.

An extensive choice of menus has been developed to assist in the take up of FSM. Secondary menus have been created with a wide range of products with flexible pricing options which allows pupils to purchase food items during breakfast, morning break and lunchtime. In addition, RCT provide bespoke menus for pupils with allergen requirements, a vegetarian main meal is available daily in all schools and a vegan menu has also been created and is accessible to all pupils on request.

Split lunch services have been implemented in a number of schools, these encourage pupils to eat a healthy lunch by reducing queues and creating a calm, social environment.

Online payments have been implemented in all schools to reduce the requirement of pupils bringing cash to schools. This reduces bullying and ensures that money provided to pupils is actually spent on breakfast or lunch, the use of cashless systems also ensures pupil FSM anonymity.

Action 10 - 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 set out a number of key service priorities for 2020/21, one of which included:

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 temporary measures. These measures build on the "Signs & Lines" approach implemented in 2019/20 and continue to safeguard the public amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to changing Welsh Government guidance implemented to help mitigate the risk to public safety by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Council have implemented and where appropriate withdrawn a series of temporary measures across our town centres, these include:

- where necessary, renewal of directional arrows placed on the footways to direct pedestrian movement throughout the town centres.
- where appropriate removal and subsequent reinstatement of some street furniture from town centres.
- signage placed at bus stops / shelters throughout town centres re-enforcing COVID-19 safeguarding measures.
- signage placed on litter bins throughout the town centres re-enforcing social distancing measures.
- timely guidance distributed to businesses located within town centres (and the wider smaller retail areas) outlining their responsibility to implement and review appropriate safeguarding measures.
- administration of a Welsh Government COVID-19 Grant for businesses, enabling internal and external alterations to maximise use of outside space. A similar Valleys Taskforce Grant was also extended to businesses across 28 smaller retail areas within the county borough.
- signage placed at key points throughout town centres promoting a shop local message whilst retaining a strong COVID-19 safeguarding message through a “hands, face, space” approach.

In implementing the above measures the Council has continued to engage positively with a number of stakeholders including town centre businesses and representative groups, Elected Members and the RCT 50+ Forum. This considers the impact of such measures on accessibility and pedestrian movement and has enabled the Council to respond appropriately and considerately. It has also enabled the Council to provide appropriate and timely advice and guidance to businesses, to safeguard employees and customers.

We delivered a comprehensive “shop local” campaign to encourage consumers to utilise local businesses where possible. The campaign was delivered through a mixed approach and included the production of videos showcasing the many products and services on offer within RCT town centres, promotion via the Council’s website and social media platforms, as well as the placement of banners at key locations in and around the town centres. The campaign was also extended to include a more focused campaign to deliver a “shop local at Christmas” message.

We hosted a Santa’s Grotto within town centres enabling individuals and families to receive a positive experience within a managed environment, that complied with COVID-19 guidance. The grotto’s were well attended and positively received.

Following a successful launch of the **Hop, Shop and Save Scheme** in 2019, the Council has continued to work in partnership with Stagecoach South Wales to further develop and promote the scheme. The scheme enables Stagecoach passengers to receive a discount on a range of products and services across RCT town centres, upon the production of a valid bus ticket. The scheme is available for all residents of RCT, including those with a “bus pass” and with many older people and disabled people relying on a bus pass to travel to be able to access town centres, the scheme has continued to be popular.

We have continued to work collaboratively with business groups and other stakeholders to deliver a range of projects that improve the “look and feel” of our town centres. These include the installation of new public benches and free standing flower planters throughout Aberdare town centre and the development of an area of land adjacent to the Parc & Dare Theatre in Treorchy to provide additional public and community space.

Utilising the Welsh Government’s Transforming Towns Business Fund, the Council have worked collaboratively with town centre business groups to develop and deliver a range of projects aimed at improving and promoting the town centre offer. These include the production of town centre specific promotional videos, a facility providing test trading opportunities and piloting of alternative town centre data collection provisions to inform future strategic decisions.

OBJECTIVE 3 – TO PROMOTE SAFE COMMUNITIES

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

Action 1 - Review, develop and re-implement the Hate Crime Strategy.

The Crown Prosecution Service defines a Hate Crime as:

“'hate crime' can be used to describe a range of criminal behavior where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility or demonstrates hostility towards the victim's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity.

These aspects of a person's identity are known as 'protected characteristics'. A hate crime can include verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment, assault and bullying, as well as damage to property. The perpetrator can also be a friend, carer or acquaintance who exploits their relationship with the victim for financial gain or some other criminal purpose.”

During 2020, 465 hate crimes were recorded in the Cwm Taf area (Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil).

The tables below show the breakdown across the 5 characteristics, area and month:

Table 1a. Hate Crimes by characteristic

Disability	64
Race	271
Religion	15
Sexual Orientation	98
Transgender	17

Table 1b. Hate Crimes by area

Rhondda	117
Cynon	90
Taf	134
Merthyr	105

Table 1c. Hate Crimes by month (2019)

January	28
February	25
March	33
April	31
May	38
June	57
July	48
August	43
September	53
October	39
November	31
December	20

Tackling Hate Crime in Rhondda Cynon Taf

We have continued to work closely with partner agencies including South Wales Police (SWP). Increased partnership working has enabled us to ensure that residents get a positive and consistent response.

National Hate Crime Awareness Week (NHCAW)

A series of 5 videos have been produced, one for each protected characteristic. They were released on social media (one per day) throughout NHCAW on the Council's, Merthyr Tydfil Council's and South Wales Police social media pages (Facebook and Twitter) and their respective websites as well as being shared by a number of other outlets including the local radio station social media pages. The videos were very well received by the public, being viewed by thousands of social media users throughout the week.

- Race – <https://youtu.be/BXgT19Echy4>
- Disability – <https://youtu.be/V147ZhuDcgc>
- Gender Identity – <https://youtu.be/8SqsTGloKZc>
- Sexual Orientation – <https://youtu.be/leS9vj20qKI>
- Religion – <https://youtu.be/Ugy6NkANnDY>

Cwm Taf Community Cohesion Officers and South Wales Police Community Safety Officers undertook interviews with local radio station GTFM to promote NHCAW to educate listeners about Hate Crime and provide information about how to report Hate Crime and where to access support.

Hate Crime Awareness Training

During the relaxation of the restrictions two Hate Crime awareness sessions were delivered to local primary school pupils.

Action 2 - Review the existing approach to tackling modern slavery.

Training on modern day slavery (including train the trainer) was due to be delivered in April 2020 by BAWSO. This sadly had to be rearranged to a later date. Modern day slavery continues to be discussed within the virtual Serious Organised Crime Board.

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.

The Senior Educational Psychologist for Well-being is working with Barnardos, the Police and Education representatives to develop a programme of support for schools. Project development will continue next year.

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.

According to Seligman's PERMA model:

- **Positive emotions** refer to hedonic feelings of happiness (e.g. feeling joyful, content, and cheerful).
- **Engagement** refers to psychological connection to activities or organisations (e.g. feeling absorbed, interested, and engaged in life).
- **Relationships** include feeling socially integrated, cared about and supported by others, and satisfied with one's social connections.
- **Meaning** refers to believing that one's life is valuable and feeling connected to something greater than oneself.
- **Accomplishment** involves making progress toward goals, feeling capable to do daily activities, and having a sense of achievement.

Seligman proposes that these five pillars contribute to individual well-being.

- 80 schools are now registered and have been set-up to use the PERMA tools.
- 2 hour virtual training sessions have been conducted with all schools to complete the registration process and to demonstrate and discuss how the tools can be used in their setting.
- Pre-recorded training videos have also been developed and uploaded to support schools in using the products.
- Whole School training is due to be delivered via webinar and pre-recorded e-learning content.
- User guides and starter packs have been disseminated to every school following their registration.
- An initial training evaluation has been completed with each school to identify their perception of the products and how they intend to use them in their setting.

Action 5 - Strengthen collection and analysis of data for bullying incidents in schools.

The Access and Inclusion local authority Anti-Bullying Policy has been amended in line with the Welsh Government statutory guidance, Rights, Respect and Equalities. The updated RCT policy clarifies and strengthens expectations and processes in relation to data collection and analysis of bullying – particularly in relation to protected characteristics. The LA responsibilities within the revised guidance are to:

- Analyse the data from schools and identify patterns and trends and provide information to schools to ensure they are prepared to be responsive to trends.
- Have a specific focus on accurate recording of prejudice-related incidents to enable monitoring of patterns and prevent discrimination to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Monitor equality data and advise schools on local trends.

We require schools to provide a report of bullying incidents to us on a termly basis. We monitor the reports and provide support and challenge to schools to address issues. The next step is to improve practice through training and advice. Implicit in the updated policy is the need for more regular review and monitoring processes in the schools. The updated policy provides a document for all schools to use on the SIMS system which will support the collection of necessary data. The policy states that:

Governing bodies should monitor:

- an overview of recorded bullying incidents in their setting to see how long it takes on average for cases to be resolved
- the recurrence rates
- whether learners who have reported bullying incidents believe they got a satisfactory outcome
- whether there are any emerging trends or groups being discriminated against
- whether there are online cases that suggest work is required with the learners, parents/carers and staff to counter new forms of bullying
- absenteeism rates
- that the regularly collected data on reported incidents is showing progress towards the equality objectives.

Action 6 - Further develop the freedom programme with Women's Aid to better understand specific needs for victims of domestic violence from underrepresented groups.

The SAFE Project

Identifying domestic abuse at the earliest opportunity is key to keeping people safe. The SAFE project provides an accessible service based within the local community to support those who have experienced or are currently experiencing domestic violence and are identified through risk assessment or Public Protection Notices (PPN) as low to medium risk. The project aims to increase the opportunities available to victims of domestic violence by implementing early intervention and prevention strategies. The services provided by the project build capacity by increasing the service user's skills to identify the early warning signs of abusive behaviours within current or future relationships, increase their confidence and self-esteem and reduce isolation.

The project delivers this in a variety of ways including;

- One to one support / advocacy (short term)
- Life skills sessions including domestic abuse awareness programme and confidence building.
- Direct referral pathways to other support agencies.
- Access to legal advice and debt management surgeries.

The project enables victims of domestic violence to access information and support in a friendly and supportive environment and aims to reduce the risk to the individual, increase safety, prevent further crime, and keep people safe in their own homes – breaking the cycle of domestic abuse.

Group programmes

At the start of quarter 1 in 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the way in which the project could deliver its services. The adaptations included a reduction in face-to-face and group working sessions.

As a result, all educational, trauma informed, domestic abuse, educational sessions, such as the freedom programme, recovery toolkit, hope to recovery and well-being sessions were delivered online.

In total, 213 victims were supported to complete domestic abuse educational programmes.

Their feedback tells us that:

- 95% 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.
- 89% stated that they felt increased confidence in their ability to create a safe environment for themselves and their family.
- 100% stated an increased knowledge of appropriate agencies from which they could receive support for their emotional and physical well-being.
- 90% stated they felt an increase in their confidence and self-esteem as a result of attending the sessions.

Individual support

During the year 322 victims required additional individual support sessions. During these sessions our team were able to support victims to identify need and reduce risk through risk assessments and safety planning.

Surgeries

Throughout the year 74 victims required legal advice regarding their situations. The project supported them to access free 20-minute consultations with a solicitor within their local area.

Equality Monitoring Data

This data refers to 512 clients supported.

Sex

502 identified as female

7 identified as male

2 identified as transgender.

Ethnicity

African - 3

Black other - 6

Chinese - 4

Indian - 8

Mixed race – 27

White British – 153

White Welsh – 310

Age

16 – 21	32
21 – 30	125
31 – 40	117

41 – 50	96
51 – 60	65
61 – 70	52
71 – 80	22
81 – 90	3

Geographical Location

275 Pontypridd / Taf

236 Cynon.

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 are 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 Equal Pay Audit identified the following Equal Pay gaps:

2021

	Combined	Full Time	Part Time
All Employees	10.45%	-12.21%	7.03%
Non Teaching	11.37%	-10.23%	3.69%
Teaching	5.04%	3.87%	11.77%

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.

There has been no significant changes to the gender pay gap for March 2021.

Action 1 - Deliver the roll out of the performance review process for staff at all grades.

The Council's new performance review process for staff is being incrementally rolled-out to ensure effective implementation and understanding. Roll-out has been undertaken for Chief Officer post holders and for staff on Grades 11 to 15. Embedding the new performance review process and focusing on compliance has been the focus this year and has unfortunately delayed further roll-out to all staff. However service areas are continuing to use the previous performance review processes with their staff not on the grades mentioned above, although central monitoring for this is not undertaken.

We will continue to roll-out the revised performance reviews Council wide, with particular attention to ensuring that staff without access to work IT and no Council email address have a performance review.

Action 2 - Improve the monitoring of the performance review process.

As part of the new performance review process we monitor compliance, the training needs analysis and we review the process which includes obtaining feedback from managers and staff. We will continue to develop the monitoring process during further roll-out of the process.

Action 3 - Better understand whether barriers exist regarding the progression of women into senior positions.

Following feedback from our female staff we are exploring how we can encourage more women to apply for senior roles. We are developing a Women in Leadership Programme which aims to remove barriers to progression. The programme aims to provide a platform for women throughout the Council, regardless of role or job grade to embrace these unique skills, inspiring and empowering them to grow and develop to break through the 'glass ceiling'. The programme will be launched in 2021/22 where we will host a number of events that will look at barriers, dispelling commonly held myths and will look to generate inspiring discussion around women developing and bringing fresh insights to the table. The overarching aim is to create a culture shift by implementing initiatives such as mentoring, coaching and establishing networking opportunities, enabling women to feel confident and able to progress onto the next stage of their career within the Council.

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 in 2023.

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 are outlined below:

Action 1 - Develop a programme of sexual harassment training and awareness.

Unfortunately work in this area has not yet commenced due to priorities shifting due to the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement. We hope to commence this work in 2021/22. It is clear though that any work will now also have to take into account sexual harassment in the digital environment as many of our staff now work from home on a regular basis.

Action 2 - Undertake a review of all our mental health activities and develop annual plans which provide education, training and interventions.

We have undertaken several reviews of mental health activities and these are ongoing however, the pandemic has meant that these plans had to be adjusted in order to support the workforce throughout the pandemic.

We have consulted with the Senior Leadership Team, Senior Management Teams, trades unions, managers and staff throughout the organisation on a range of matters

such as the requirement for mental health training. We have introduced a range of activities in education, training and interventions for staff well-being including mental health.

These include:

- Mental health awareness training match funded by the Council and Welsh Union Learning funding. We continue to develop this each year.
- Over 600 managers attended mental health awareness training.
- 2 pilot groups for i-act mental health awareness training for staff was attended by 30 staff.
- The 'Pandemic and Beyond' series was developed and delivered over 5 modules looking at individual and team impact on mental health and psychological safety. Over 400 staff attended these sessions.
- The introduction of a confidential staff well-being software called Cari which provides staff and the organisation with an overall well-being score. Staff can access support and interventions through their Cari account.
- A staff well-being line was set up to support staff throughout the pandemic giving staff access to:
 - keyworker testing
 - self-referral for well-being assessments
 - self-referral for physiotherapy
 - a listening ear.
- Well-being assessments were introduced in Occupational Health to assess an individual's need, then refer into the most appropriate support.
- We introduced a bespoke school counselling service for all teachers.
- 600 Additional hours for counselling were provided.

Action 3 - Source and develop a suite of training for managers on equality and diversity topics.

Work commenced on this project this year and is due to be completed in 2021/22. A number of suitable e-learning courses have been identified and tested and discussions have taken place with the People Development Team regarding their roll-out across the Council. The internal learning platform 'RCT Source' will support the training material and a Diversity and Inclusion section has been developed to support staff learning with additional information and resources.

Action 4 - Become more disability confident as an organisation.

We continued to meet our responsibilities under the '[Disability Confident](#)' Scheme so that as an employer we make the most of the talents disabled people can bring. Examples of how we do this include:

- Providing support for dyslexic and neurodiverse colleagues via 'Read&Write' software. Key officers have received training in this software in order to advise other members of staff how to use the tools.
- Reviewing key accessibility policy and guidelines like the 'See it Right' guide. Since the transition to work from home during the pandemic, online and e-communication has become more and more prevalent. The guidance now contains information on contrast, colour usage, font and text size, as well as accessibility tips and features included in Microsoft products like Word and Teams.
- Electing a Senior Diversity Champion for Disability. The Senior Champion is a direct link for our Disability and Carers Staff Network to contact our Senior Leadership Team to share priorities and concerns. This representation and support from the Senior Leadership Team is vital to accessibility awareness and improvement.
- Raising awareness of disability awareness via internal staff communications.
- Working with the Business Disability Forum (BDF) to become a Disability Smart organisation. Criteria that needs to be met is in line with the Disability Confident Scheme, so will develop the Council in both areas.
- Keeping the HR Team updated with relevant disability awareness webinars and training.
- Proposal for Council service areas to become Autism Aware.

Action 5 - Undertake workplace equality monitoring.

As previously outlined in this report, an equality monitoring toolkit has been developed which highlights the best practice equality monitoring questions that should be completed by staff. Internally, equality monitoring data is vital to examine the Council's progress concerning its legal duties and equality objectives. It helps us to identify gaps and trends and consequently we can develop action plans to address those gaps.

The Council is implementing a new HR and Payroll system, unfortunately due to a number of factors the implementation date has been shifted to November 2021. This is a significant project covering all workforce data. The best practice equality monitoring fields outlined in the toolkit will be added onto this system. This provides us with an opportunity to collect data on characteristics such as non-binary identities. This is something which we have not been in a position to do previously due to

development limitations in the current system. Following implementation of the new system there will be a push to obtain up-to-date staff information.

Action 6 - Replicate existing good practice to reflect all protected characteristics.

In 2020/21 the Council marked a number of significant days either by raising awareness through articles and blogs on its internal intranet and with staff networks or by holding awareness raising events. Articles were written about the following, they appear in date order:

- International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia
- Mental Health Awareness Week
- Statement response to the death of George Floyd
- Reserves Day
- Pride Cymru
- World Suicide Prevention Day
- Bi Visibility Day
- Black History Month
- International Day of Older Persons
- Dyslexia Awareness Week
- Baby Loss Awareness Week
- World Mental Health Day
- World Menopause Day
- Men's Mental Health Month
- Trans Awareness Week and Trans Day of Remembrance
- International Day of People with Disabilities
- Welsh Language Rights Day
- Holocaust Memorial Day
- LGBT+ History Month
- Time to Talk Day
- Zero Discrimination Day
- International Women's Day
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

In addition to the above, a number of events were held across the Council to raise awareness and promote diversity and inclusion.

Men's Mental Health Month

For Men's Mental Health Month we felt it was important for staff to know they work in a safe and supportive environment and asked staff to help break the stigma. We did this by producing 3 short videos from male members of staff, including one of our Senior Managers, talking about their own experiences of mental health and why it's so important to seek help or talk about it. This was an incredibly powerful campaign and we have also shared these videos via our newsletter and intranet for all staff to access. This is [Paul's story](#)

Time to Talk Day

Time to Talk Day in February provided a focus for staff across the Council to have conversations about mental health without being judged. For 'Time to Talk' day this year we encouraged staff to bring the conversation into routine team meetings or to create a catch up via Microsoft Teams, whilst so many of us are working from home due to the pandemic. We shared resources to help staff such as a digital screen background to use in online meetings, posters and banners and numbers to call if you need specific help or further support.

Proud Councils

RCT lead 'Proud Council's'; a network of South Wales based local authorities in promoting and achieving an inclusive workplace and community for all LGBT+ people. This year we supported a virtual Pride Cymru event, which was a panel debate that was accessed by hundreds of people across the UK.

We created a digital calendar of events for LGBT+ History Month to highlight all the events and activities that were available during the month and we also organised events and resources ourselves. This included a lecture on LGBT+ Global Issues by Coleg y Cymoedd, a Workshop from the Author Norena Shopland, working in partnership with Cynon Valley Museum, and an online event run by RCT and Cardiff Council's Staff Networks.

Race Equality

The current Strategic Equality Plan does not feature a specific objective on Race Equality. Since the tragic killing of George Floyd and the subsequent Black Lives Matter campaign we acknowledged we needed to focus on Race Equality within the Council. To support this work we have appointed a Graduate Officer to work to develop this. We used positive action in the appointment of this role. We have established a Staff Network 'Spotlight' who are providing us with the lived experience of being a Black member of staff in the workplace and community. 'Spotlight'

members have identified a number of workplace areas that we need to focus on e.g. policy.

Education colleagues have also established a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Working Group, and have commissioned a research project looking at the experience of Black pupils in our secondary schools.

In March we signed the Zero Racism Wales pledge which was launched on the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This demonstrates our commitment to take a stand against racism.

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD)

For HMD 2021, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the public and Council staff were asked to spend some time on the day, in the safety of their own homes and workplaces, reflecting on the atrocities of the worst time in world history in which millions of people were brutally killed at the hands of Nazi Germany, and the subsequent genocides.

International Women's Day

We hosted a virtual event for International Women's Day themed around 'Choose to Challenge'. The event was a discussion about stereotypes, discrimination and women's experiences in work. Our guest speaker, [Georgina Gilbert](#), a firefighter with over 20 years' experience, co-founder of the [Antarctic Fire Angels](#) and inspirational speaker for [Ordinary Extraordinary](#), spoke about her story and breaking down barriers in gender inequality.

Staff Networks

Our staff networks have continued to grow and develop and they played an instrumental role in providing peer support during the pandemic. Network meetings went on-line and this encouraged greater attendance with more regular meet ups. All of our networks, Allies, Disability and Carers and Perthyn, our LGBTQ+ staff network help promote and raise awareness of specific days to all staff to help create a better culture in the workplace.

At the end of 2020 we also launched Spotlight, our staff network for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff. The Council employs small numbers of this group. It is therefore essential that we understand their experience of being a minority in the workplace.

LGBTQ+ inclusion

The Council continues to be recognised as an inclusive employer by ranking in [Stonewall's Top 100](#) employers in 2020, demonstrating our commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusivity. Due to the pandemic there was no submission for 2021 but we endeavour to continue our good work in creating an inclusive workplace for all of our LGBTQ+ staff and service users.

In 2019 we were able to consult with the public at Rhondda Pride, where we identified some gaps in support for schools. Although we have been challenged with the pandemic and its effect on schools, we have still been able to offer support to schools to ensure our LGBTQ+ pupils feel more supported. We have worked closely with the Education Department to create LGBTQ+ specific resources to better educate teaching staff to feel confident to support and teach pupils on these specific topics. As part of our Stonewall Diversity Champion membership we have also been able to offer free training courses to our schools in regards to supporting LGBTQ+ pupils with mental health and other specific challenges and issues they might face.

An LGBTQ+ Education working group has been set up to ensure resources and communication, between different services across the Council, is more effective in regards to supporting young people and children who access services or attend any of our schools.

We have focused on LGBTQ+ inclusion within RCT by raising awareness and promoting specific campaigns and days that specifically raise awareness and acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community.

We have also run events to raise awareness, for example we organised specific events throughout LGBTQ+ History Month, some for internal staff only and others open to the community.

We have consulted with our LGBTQ+ staff network and decided to raise the Progress Flag on LGBTQ+ specific days across the Council. We have an LGBTQ+ Progress Flag flying at Llys Cadwyn in Pontypridd for the majority of the year to show how important we feel about LGBTQ+ inclusion in the Council. We will also be raising the trans, bi and Progress flag for all buildings across the Council to raise on specific days and events to ensure people can see that we recognise that some groups within the LGBTQ+ community can face more discrimination than others.

We have offered webinars and free events to our staff in relation to Bi Visibility and other LGBTQ+ topics and shared resources.

Overall Progress

The Council has made significant progress in many of the equality objectives. It is noted that some have not yet commenced and progress in these will be monitored in future annual reports. This report reflects the period of the initial lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as such progress on some projects had been delayed due to the pandemic response. However, due to the pandemic, much positive and innovative work has been done to improve the accessibility and inclusion of the services we provide across the borough.

Our work to deliver equality objectives contained in our Strategic Equality Plan helps us to show 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'. But 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 Council introduced a screening process in January 2012 which is designed to make the process as effective as possible and to ensure that any information gathered at the screening stage can be used if a full EIA is required. However, the Council automatically carries out a full EIA on its Change proposals process.

The table below includes a snapshot of EIA's carried out in 2020/21.

Equality Impact Assessments

Policy/Procedure	Date
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Proposed Extension and Variation to the Borough's Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Orders	June 2020
Safer Places – Social Distances in Town Centres and Public Places during Coronavirus	June 2020
Modernisation of the Council's Residential Care Home Service for Older People	December 2020
21 st Century Schools Programme – Proposals to Improve Education Provision for Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llyn-Y-Forwyn	January 2021
21 st Century Schools Programme – Update on the Proposals to Improve Education Provision in the Cynon Valley	February 2021
The Council's 2021-2022 Revenue Budget Strategy	February 2021
The Council's 3 Years Capital Programme 2021/22 – 2023/24 Incorporating a Review of Earmarked Reserves	February 2021

Full details of decisions are included in Cabinet reports which are available on the following link:

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Committees/Committees.aspx>

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 SQuID which is part of the National Procurement Website, www.Sell2Wales.co.uk.

It contains a set of core questions commonly asked at the selection stage and has a database of suppliers' answers stored for re-use, and a tool for buyers to generate a selection questionnaire using a risk-based wizard for each procurement project. The idea is that working together these three things deliver a number of benefits:

- Increased efficiency for both suppliers and buyers, by allowing standard questions and answers to be stored for future use, by 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

We will work towards further embedding and achieving the actions as outlined in the [Strategic Equality Plan Action Plan 2019-2022](#). Next year it will be important that we respond to emerging issues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement.

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 Equality and Diversity 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.

Gender

The table below shows the gender breakdown of employees:

Gender	Total	% of Workforce
Male	2781	25.5%

Female	8123	74.5%
Total	10904	100.0%

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	614	5.6%
25-34	1944	17.8%
35-44	2580	23.7%
45-54	3117	28.6%
55-64	2261	20.7%
65+	388	3.6%
Total	10904	100.0%

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	209	1.9%
Non Disabled	8800	80.7%
Prefer not to say	21	0.2%
Information not held	1874	17.2%
Total	10904	100.0%

Information is held on 83% 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. Although the staff equality profile questionnaire gives the definition of disability, some employees with a 'defined' disability may not choose to identify as having a disability.

National Identify and Ethnicity

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by ethnicity:

Ethnicity	Number
Asian	8
Asian British	2
Asian Chinese	4
Asian Cornish	1
Asian Indian	6
Asian Pakistani	1
Asian Other	4
Black	4
Black African	7
Black British	4
Black Other	2
Chinese	4
Mixed Other	14
Mixed White & Asian	2
Mixed White & Black African	2
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	5
Other	26
Prefer not to say	17
White	4789
White British	2086
White Cornish	1
White English	37
White Irish	10
White Other	21
White Scottish	10
White Welsh	1749
Not Known	2088
Total	10904

The demographic of Rhondda Cynon Taf is 2%* of people identify themselves with an ethnicity other than White British, Welsh, English or Scottish.

*statswales.gov.wales at 30 June 2019

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by national identity:

National Identity	Number of Employees
African	4
Any Other Asian Background	2
Any Other Mixed Background	2
Any Other White Background	10
Bangladeshi	1
British	1317
Caribbean	1
Chinese	4
English	188
European	14

Indian	4
Irish	16
Other	5
Scottish	22
Welsh	4220
White and Asian	4
White and Black Caribbean	1
Not Known	5089
Total	10904

Information is held on 53% 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	2657
Muslim	14
Hindu	7
Buddhist	12
Sikh	2
Other	102
% of workforce identifying with a religion	25.6%
None	2857
Prefer not to say	338
Information not held	4915
Total	10904

Information is held on 55% of employees with the predominant faith being Christian.

Sexual Orientation

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by sexual orientation:

Sexual Orientation	Total
Heterosexual	3854
Gay Man	37
Gay Woman/Lesbian	40
Bisexual	25
% of workforce identifying a sexual orientation	36.3%
Prefer not to say	223
Information not held	6725
Total	10904

Information is held on 38% of employees. This is the same as reported last year. As part of the Stonewall Diversity Champion's Programme, work has and will continue to encourage more employees to complete this category on equality monitoring forms.

Pregnancy and Maternity

As at 31 March 2021 there were 132 employees on maternity. During the year 2020/21, 307 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 as at 31 March 2020 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	Total
Administrator	917	264	1181
Ancillary	1512	497	2009
Assistant Headteacher	38	32	70
Community and Social Care	1383	264	1647
Deputy Headteacher	70	47	117
Frontline and Customer Care	366	282	648
Headteacher	83	38	121
Middle Manager	165	85	250
School Support	1489	85	1574
Skilled Manual Worker	32	123	155
Strategic Manager	31	40	71
Supervisor	168	210	378
Teacher	1345	395	1740
Technical, Specialist & Professional	484	402	886
Unqualified Teacher	40	17	57
Total	8123	2781	10904

As last year, the data provides very little 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 2021:

- Chief Officers (Head of Service and above)
- National Joint Council
- 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
Group Director	0	2	2

Director Level 1	0	2	2
Director Level 2	3	5	8
Service Director Level 1	1	2	3
Service Director Level 2	3	7	10
Head of Service Level 1	12	8	20
Head of Service Level 2	4	6	10
Total	23	33	56

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 Chief Officer grades.

Employees by Gender and Grade – National Joint Council

Grade	Female	Male	Total
GR1	252	65	317
GR2	836	44	880
GR3	480	141	621
GR4	868	233	1101
GR5	789	422	1211
GR6	1151	334	1485
GR7	561	158	719
GR8	293	127	420
GR9	272	146	418
GR10	243	179	422
GR11	320	130	450
GR12	153	66	219
GR13	113	57	170
GR14	13	12	25
GR15	54	35	89
Total	6398	2149	8547

This information indicates that while 74.5% of the total Council workforce is female, it is females that dominate the lower pay grades. This will be an area that will be looked at within the Gender Pay objective in the Strategic Equality Plan.

Employees by Gender and Grade – Teachers/Education

Grade	Female	Male	Total
Education Psychologists and Advisers	89	28	117
Leadership Group/Headteachers	81	38	119
Deputy & Assistant Headteachers	134	87	221
Teachers	1357	402	1759

Total	1661	555	2216
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The figures above indicate that females make up 75% of the education profession.

Individual salary grades of Education staff 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	2572	1879	4451
Permanent Part Time	1582	231	1813
Permanent Part Time Term Time	2154	83	2237
Permanent Term Time	134	25	159
Temporary Full Time	373	213	586
Temporary Part Time	138	43	181
Temporary Part Time Term Time	490	55	545
Temporary Term Time	13	3	16
Casuals	667	249	916
Total	8123	2781	10904

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

A total of 446 vacancies were advertised during the year 2020/21. The following table indicates the results of the recruitment monitoring for the same period. Please note that more people are appointed to posts than the number of posts advertised. This is due to multiple post holders in the same job e.g. social workers.

Applicants for Employment and Promotion by Protected Characteristic

	Applicants	Shortlisted	Appointed
Female	4275	1345	336
Male	2795	695	141
Minority Ethnic	504	105	17
Disabled	409	123	19

LGB	429	120	25
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The numbers of people appointed in each category reflect the general makeup of the Council as a whole.

Training

Equality monitoring is normally 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. Sexual orientation and pregnancy and maternity were added during 2014/15.

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 in to a departmental or divisional 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. This however will be considered.

Due the pandemic the delivery of formal training was reviewed, unfortunately it appears that equality monitoring was not undertaken. This will be reviewed for next year.

Disciplinary & Grievance

Disciplinary and Grievance cases are recorded and monitored through the Vision System. There were a total of 193 cases covering disciplinary, grievance and dignity at work and disciplinary action resulting from sickness absence in 2020/21. The tables below provide equality monitoring information for these cases:

Gender

	Total	Discipline	Discipline related to Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Male	100	62	31	0	7
Female	95	60	21	0	14
Total	195	122	52	0	21

As can be seen from the table above there were more males involved, however when you break this down into percentages, 50.8% of disciplinary cases involved males and 49.2% involved females.

Age

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
16 – 24	15	7	6	0	2
25 – 34	31	20	7	0	4
35 – 44	50	33	11	0	6
45 – 54	50	29	14	0	7
55 – 64	42	29	11	0	2
65+	7	4	3	0	0
Total	195	122	52	0	21

Disability

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Disabled	2	2	0	0	0
Non Disabled	157	99	42	0	16
Information not held	36	21	10	0	5
Total	195	122	52	0	21

Ethnicity

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Asian	1	1	0	0	0
Black	0	0	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0
Mixed	0	0	0	0	1
White	145	96	37	0	13
Other	1	1	0	0	0
Information not held	46	24	15	0	7
Total	195	122	52	0	21

Religion or Belief

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
No Religion	57	34	20	0	3
Christian	41	28	8	0	5
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	10	9	0	0	1
Information not held	87	51	24	0	12
Total	195	122	52	0	21

Sexual Orientation

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Heterosexual	57	35	16	0	6
Gay/Lesbian	4	2	1	0	1
Bisexual	0	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to say	10	8	2	0	0
Information not held	124	77	33	0	14
Total	193	122	52	0	21

Gender Reassignment & Pregnancy and Maternity

There were 2 employees in these categories involved in disciplinary, sickness absence or grievance cases.

Leaving Employment

Information gained from the Vision System shows that a total of 688 employees left the employment of the Council in 2020/21, which included 7 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 2020/21

Reasons for Leaving by Gender

Reason for Leaving	Female	Male	Total
Age Retirement	55	16	71
Death in Service	7	5	12
Dismissed	3	4	7
Early Retirement (Teachers)	4	1	5

End of Contract	66	15	81
Failed Probationary Period	2	0	2
Ill Health	9	9	18
Inability to Attend Work	0	2	2
Mutual Agreement	64	13	77
Redundant	7	0	7
Transfer to another Council	19	13	32
Voluntary	254	87	341
Voluntary early retirement and redundancy	18	7	25
Voluntary redundancy	6	2	8
Total	514	174	688

The gender breakdown of those leaving reflects the gender breakdown of the Council as a whole.

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	26	45	71
Death in Service	0	0	2	3	7	0	12
Dismissed	0	3	1	2	1	0	7
Early retirement (Teachers)	0	0	0	0	5	0	5
End of Contract	12	38	21	7	2	1	81
Failed probationary period	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Ill health	0	0	1	3	11	3	18
Inability to Attend Work	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Mutual agreement	0	3	6	16	29	23	77
Redundant	0	0	2	2	3	0	7
Transfer to another Council	0	6	15	9	2	0	32
Voluntary	41	99	77	69	39	16	341
VER and redundancy	0	0	0	0	20	5	25
Voluntary redundancy	0	1	1	5	1	0	8
Total	53	152	128	116	146	93	688

Reason for Leaving by Disability

Reason for Leaving	Total
Age Retirement	1
Death in Service	1
End of Contract	1

Ill health	2
Inability to Attend Work	1
Mutual agreement	4
Voluntary	3
Total	13

Reason for Leaving by Ethnicity

Reason	White	Ethnic Minority	Not Known	Total
Age retirement	67	0	4	71
Death in service	12	0	0	12
Dismissed	5	0	2	7
Early retirement (Teachers)	4	1	0	5
End of contract	63	2	16	81
Failed probationary period	2	0	0	2
Ill health	18	0	0	18
Inability to Attend Work	2	0	0	2
Mutual agreement	66	1	10	77
Redundant	7	0	0	7
Transfer to another Council	24	0	8	32
Voluntary	253	8	80	341
VER with redundancy	22	0	3	25
Voluntary redundancy	6	0	2	8
Total	551	12	125	688

Reason for Leaving by Religion or Belief

Reason	Buddhist	Christian	Muslim	No Religion	Other	Prefer not to say	Not Known	Total
Age Retirement	0	27	0	11	2	2	29	71
Death in Service	0	5	0	3	0	0	4	12
Dismissed	0	2	0	2	0	1	2	7
Early retirement (teachers)	0	3	0	1	0	0	1	5
End of contract	0	26	1	21	1	4	28	81

Failed probationary period	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Ill health	0	5	0	3	0	1	9	18
Inability to Attend Work	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Mutual agreement	0	20	0	10	0	0	47	77
Redundant	0	2	0	2	0	0	3	7
Transfer to another Council	0	11	0	8	0	2	11	32
Voluntary	2	63	2	126	3	16	129	341
VER with redundancy	0	13	0	2	1	3	6	25
Voluntary redundancy	0	3	0	2	0	0	3	8
Total	2	182	3	193	7	29	272	688

Reason for Leaving by Sexual Orientation

Reason	Hetero-sexual	Gay/Lesbian	Bi-sexual	Prefer not to say	Not Known	Total
Age retirement	36	0	0	1	34	71
Death in service	7	0	0	0	5	12
Dismissed	2	0	0	0	5	7
Early retirement (Teachers)	3	0	0	0	2	5
End of contract	10	1	0	0	70	81
Failed probationary period	1	0	0	0	1	2
Ill health	7	0	0	0	11	18
Inability to Attend Work		1	0	0	1	2
Mutual agreement	21	0	0	1	55	77
Redundant	3		0	0	4	7
Transfer to another Council	12	0	0	0	20	32
Voluntary	129	3	2	12	195	341
VER with redundancy	17	0	0	2	6	25
Voluntary redundancy	3	0	0	0	5	8
Total	251	5	2	16	414	688