Rhondda Cynon Taf Council

Annual Equality Report

1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

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 237,700 (Office of National Statistics (ONS) – Census 2021). The Council is the largest employer in the local area and the third largest local authority in Wales, over 79% of employees live within the Council boundaries.

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

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

- Ensuring **People:** are independent, healthy and successful;

- Creating **Places:** where people are proud to live, work and play;

- Enabling **Prosperity:** creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.

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

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

- Chief Executives

- Community & Children's Services

- Education & Inclusion Services

- Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services.

3. Reporting on Equality

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

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

What the regulations require:

The Annual Report for 2021-2022 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](#)

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](#). 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 (2021-2022)

- Employment practices

- Consultation and engagement programme

- EIAs (2021-2022)

- Employment monitoring information (2021-2022)

- Monitoring and delivery of the SEP action plan (2021-2022).

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.

<u>ADULT SOCIAL CARE SERVICES</u>

We continue to promote equality of opportunity for local people by providing accessible information about the services available to them. We do this through:

- ensuring a single point of access to our services which allows for consistency of approach;

- engaging, consulting and more recently co-producing service offers with local people to inform existing service delivery and future plans;

- undertaking assessments to determine if there is any equalities impact on our policies and activities;

- delivering services in ways which are appropriate to service user needs and, whenever possible, removing barriers which may deny access;

- increasing the availability of advocacy support to service users;

- promoting widely the availability of the Council's Complaint Process.

We have continued to embed outcome focused approaches based in practice and, in doing this, we are supporting people to achieve their own identified wellbeing outcomes. Matters relating to consent, advocacy, mental capacity, and best interests were routinely considered at an early stage in the engagement process. The information gained is used appropriately to inform assessments and care and support planning.

We are however, reviewing our approach to strength-based practice. We are considering alternative and innovative ways of working to deliver better outcomes for the local people who rely on our social care support through the adoption of the 3 conversations approach. This approach has been implemented successfully at other Councils, who have seen a wide range of benefits including:

- Happier residents: receiving people-centred support, focused on what they tell us will make the biggest difference for them;

- Reduced waiting lists: with quicker response times and less time spent screening;

- Better commissioning: based on a better understanding of what local people need;

- Stronger relationships: with Health colleagues and other partners.

This is a major change from how we currently work. Therefore, if we decide to progress with this new way of working, we will first be trialling the approach and will then evaluate what has worked well and where we can make improvements before rolling out this new way of working across the whole service. Evaluation will include feedback from those who use our services, our partners, providers and Council teams who support adult social care.

ARTS, CULTURE AND LIBRARIES SERVICE

The department delivers a wide range of provision that focuses on people with disabilities, and people who are vulnerable over a range of issues or who are affected by poverty.

Services have worked closely with partners and continue to do so to identify any areas of concern as early as possible so that appropriate support is provided by the most suitable partner to meet resident needs. The Community Support Steering Group is key in this. This network has been the platform for sharing information and encouraging joint working.

We offer a range of support that focuses on improving the lives of those disadvantaged through ill health, disability, economic circumstances as follows:

- We are rolling out Dementia Friends e-learning across the workforce.

- The Library Service actively supports local and national initiatives designed to promote inclusiveness and diversity, such as promoting books by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic authors; accessing funding to provide activities that encourage socialisation; the People's Library Wales pilot encouraging 'books' to share their real-life stories on topics such as body dysmorphia, racism, and domestic abuse.

- Provision of a range of Remote Library Services, including e-books and e-audio books and the @Home Library Service.

- The facilitation of increased adult changing places in communities, with potential future development through the Shared Prosperity Fund.

- Undertaking wellbeing assessments with individuals to identify needs and connect to relevant services and community organisations, such as Ukrainian refugees.

In relation to the Ukraine response, cultural orientation sessions have taken place with both staff and guests of welcome centres in RCT, with additional weekly briefings being supported by translators. All information is provided in Ukrainian, with staff and guests communicating on daily matters using Google translate and social media systems which also have this facility.

Many of our publications are available in Easy Read format to encourage participation from people with Physical and Learning Disabilities. We've worked alongside RCT People First to co-produce Easy Read documents with service users. Examples include:

1. Easy Read Residents Survey

   The same survey questions are asked but in plain and simple language that is accompanied by pictures. One of our Community Coordinators targeted an autism session at Abercynon pool to specifically seek opinions and views from people and their parents / carers. This ensured their voices, values and opinions were included in the overall results that directly impacts the service we provide, and the funding made available for community groups.

2. <u>Wales & West Utilities Project</u>

RCT People First produced Easy Read information to go with the distribution of Carbon Monoxide monitors. A booklet was co-produced with service users with learning disabilities and an illustrator.

RCT People First have been telling our members in meetings about the importance of Carbon Monoxide monitors and the benefits of the Priority Service Register.

These Easy Read documents were used by other partners including RCT Adult Services. Adult Services provided 3 x music sessions with Forget Me Not Productions for adults with a learning disability and support staff. Groups looked at safety messages via a creative project and made up a safety slogan. The slogan was made into a jingle or short song. The jingle was shared with Wales & West Utilities and RCT Council Website as a press release.

COMMUNITY AND WELSH LANGUAGE SERVICES

The service continues to work closely with a range of partners e.g. DWP, Citizens Advice (CA) RCT to promote the support available for Universal Credit (UC) claimants. 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:

- Specific provision is delivered by the Adult Community Learning team for people with learning disabilities.

- The Employment Support team continues to be actively engaged in the Transformation programme for people with learning disabilities.

- Community for Work+ managers have designated disability leads and attend Welsh Government Disability Network meetings and staff teams have attended relevant training sessions.

- The Adult Community Learning Partnership in RCT continues to engage with a higher percentage of people from the most disadvantaged wards than most other areas of Wales.

- Employment support staff have and continue to support Ukrainian refugees to find work locally.

- We have supported the CELT regional project which supports vulnerable residents to access pre-employment activities e.g. ex-offenders diversionary activities and wellbeing support for people who are economically inactive and in need of mental and physical wellbeing interventions.

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND COMMUNITY HOUSING

The service area works with a wide range of people from many diverse backgrounds and cultures as set out below.

Housing Solutions Service

A return to face-to-face working has supported a return to a more effective interpersonal interface for those customers most in need and who have vulnerabilities. The provision of the Rough-sleeper Outreach service attached to Mill Street Hostel has ensured that the Service responds quickly and effectively to engage those rough-sleeping in critical need who may be from a wide range of diverse backgrounds and are digitally excluded.

Homefinder

The RCT Housing Allocation Scheme has identified key areas in need of review including adapted housing. As well as support from internal stakeholders, the review will also incorporate service user involvement via a customer panel.

Applicants who are digitally excluded are able to apply to Homefinder by telephone, however for some applicants who require more support to make an application, a face-to-face appointment is available in Sardis House, Pontypridd. Facilities for translation services are available and are arranged in advance to enable the applicant to receive a service tailored to their specific needs.

The use of Language Line for applicants in need of translation services is available to all service areas and where required, BSL interpreters can also be utilised for Homefinder applicants.

Area Substance Misuse Commissioning Team

Barod and Cwm Taf Morganwg Community Health Board are commissioned to provide substance misuse services across the region. Individuals who have issues with substance misuse, are categorised as vulnerable because of the nature of their

problems. In addition, many have additional issues such as childhood trauma, domestic abuse, and/or poor physical health.

All services are required to have in place an equal opportunities policy and meet equality objectives in relation to protective characteristics. This is monitored as part of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Area Planning Monitoring Framework.

Vulnerable and marginalised groups include Homeless people, looked after children, those in the criminal justice system, sex workers, victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse, gypsy travellers, refugees, and veterans. In line with clinical guidelines, all veterans are entitled to priority access to services.

Access to service is a key driver for service provision across the region, the Specialist Mental Health and Substance Misuse Housing Outreach Service was developed specifically for the most complex and vulnerable individuals who find it challenging to engage with traditional community and clinic based services. The team continue to monitor equality and inclusion through annual compliance and monitoring of services and quarterly contract review meetings.

Complex Needs Panel

The service area is also heavily involved with the Serious Neglect Panel 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.

COMMUNITY WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE

The Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service has commissioned a specialist Autism training and consultancy organisation 'Autside Education' to review the current activities offered and consider in the context of neuro-divergent users of the service. As part of the review, Autside will undertake consultation events with children, young people, parents and staff, with the aim of understanding what the barriers are to participation, and the development needs of the staff to improve professional practice. The findings from the review will inform an action plan to address barriers, make service improvements, identify areas of staff training, whilst retaining and building upon current good practice. The aim is to improve the service offer available to ensure that neuro-divergent children, young people and families are not disadvantaged and have equity in accessing activities and services. From a strategic perspective the review will inform the planning, contracting and commissioning activities to ensure the service and the partner organisations are delivering fully inclusive early intervention and prevention services to neuro-divergent users of services.

Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS)

YEPS has a Youth Engagement Officer who is able to offer specialist support and advice to young people who are LGBTQIA+. 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 LGBTQIA+ support group 'Enfys' was also launched and runs on a weekly basis.

Stemming from the YEPS Equality & Diversity Youth Forum, the Pride event was established, which was a great success, celebrating not only the LGBTQIA+ community, but diversity in general. This event showcased excellent external and internal partnership working between YEPS, Play, South Wales Police and several other services. Over 1800 people attended the event at Aberdare Park, which was televised by S4C Cymru and aired during prime time on TV.

YEPS worked in partnership with Ysgol Ty Coch to offer the young people an opportunity to engage in enriching activities. Some of the activities included arts & crafts sessions and off-site trips. The sessions were offered after school and during the school holidays to ensure they were as accessible as possible. All sessions were well attended, with positive feedback from young people.

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 have had taxi transport to school and are daunted by accessing further education, work placements, training and other life opportunities after school as a result of having no prior experience in preparing and planning journeys independently. Many young people are unfamiliar with where to find information and advice and do not have 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.

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

- Generate opportunities and services that are informed by mental health and wellbeing principles;

- Increase opportunities for support and progression for young people within localities;

- Improve the awareness of health and wellbeing 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.

YEPS link in with Arts Development Team's 'Fortitude through Music' Project to support vulnerable young people to access the project which uses music as a tool to build and develop transferable skills, confidence and resilience in young people not in education, training or employment.

Play Services and Day Nurseries

The Care2Play Officer works with a key contact from each of the special schools in the borough to identify children who would benefit from the service each term. One-page profiles are shared with the designated play team who will then plan the play activities to meet the individual needs of the child attending, enabling them to access their play offer at community-based play provisions.

The Play Sufficiency Assessment was submitted this year, part of which was 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. Access audits are undertaken on all playscheme premises and the information captured in the audit aims to inform service users of the accessibility of the buildings in which the playscheme sessions are being delivered in.

Pontypridd Day Nursery has achieved recognition as an 'Autism Friendly Workplace', implementing strategies which recognise and support neurodiversity.

As part of the Welsh Government overarching [ALN Transformation Programme](#), a unified legislative framework to support children and young people aged 0-25 with ALN has led to key changes across childcare settings. Childcare staff have received training on this and are now conversant with the changes to the graduated response, ensuring that they are effectively supporting those with emerging needs.

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.

The Funding Flexibilities Team has worked closely with the Disabled Children's Team (DCT) to revise and update the specification for Rhondda Short Breaks following some concerns raised by the Service Manager relating to the service provision not aligning to the enablement ethos of the Disabled Children's Team. The service specification was updated to fully reflect the practice changes required and new performance indicators agreed that provided meaningful monitoring data. Through this work other documentation was developed including a process map. The working relationship between DCT and the provider has improved, as has the overall service delivery for vulnerable children and young people. The Funding Flexibilities Team led the monitoring of the contract and facilitate the quarterly meetings.

In response to the needs of Flying Start childcare settings additional support has been made available to providers to develop the play plans required for children to be discussed at Early Years ALN Panel. Feedback from the ALN Forum indicated there was a clear training need regarding play plans as the quality of the ones being produced by childcare settings demonstrated they were having difficulties generating appropriate SMART targets, interpreting advice and support from professional services and marrying documentation and evidence to record and monitor the presenting needs of children. The team's Assistant Educational Psychologist has designed and implemented virtual play plan clinics as a drop in, easy access forum for settings to access specific advice and support about play plan targets. These clinics have been well received, well attended and supported by the Early Years' Advisory Teacher in Education and have now been opened up to non-Flying Start settings to ensure a unified, inclusive approach across all of Early Years.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND ELECTED MEMBERS

Diversity in Democracy

A Cross Party Diversity and Democracy Working Group was established in 2021, recognising the importance of democratic institutions and public services to reflect the diversity of the population they represent and serve. The aim of the Working Group is to:

- increase diversity within democracy at the local Government Elections 2022 and any future election;

- reduce the barriers to attracting a more diverse pool of candidates;

- promote and raise awareness of the role of a Councillor and the work undertaken;

- consider Officer proposals to engage and support potential candidates;

- consider and comment upon engagement with 16–17 year old's in local government democracy;

- consider proposals for the future training / information provided to Councillors in respect of diversity;

- inform discussions with Group Leaders ahead of the 2022 Local Government Elections.

The Working Group recognised that their work will be an ongoing process to ensure that a more diverse democratic environment is created within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

A number of initiatives took place throughout the year to support this agenda including:

- Working collaboratively with the Youth Engagement and Participation Service, Schools and Colleges in the run up to the 2022 Local Government Election to further promote and educate the importance of the youth vote and the democratic process. The YEPs campaign 'isityourfirsttime' led by young people was shared through a number of platforms via the service (facebook, twitter, snapchat, Instagram, ticktock), including use of the YEPs tv live (an online programme dedicated to the voting campaign). Members were advised that the youth Members were the mouthpiece to promoting the campaign to their peers and positive engagement had been received. In addition youth workers based within schools and colleges were also assisting with promoting the campaign message.

- Improving the Council Websites 'Democracy pages' to promote the role of a Councillor with details and videos of local Members, promote how the work of a Councillor links in with everyday services taken forward by the Council and provide details and links of the different tiers of government to assist in increasing the understanding of democracy within RCT and Wales. To ensure that the page demonstrates the features available to Members – such as translation facilities, audio equipment within the Chamber, Hybrid meeting opportunities and promoting reasonable adjustments to prevent any perceived barriers for any future candidate.

- Making physical improvements to the Council Chamber to ensure that the Chamber is fully accessible.

- Inviting representatives from Race Alliance Wales and WEN Wales to discuss diversity campaigns.

- To ensure Equality and Diversity training is part of Elected member induction.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

A programme of improvements to bus borders to improve accessibility has been ongoing over the last 11 years. In 2008-2009 RCT was placed at 21st in Wales with only 3.23% of its bus stops being equipped with accessible kerbs. Figures for 2020-2021 indicate that 63.25% of the 1,208 bus stops in RCT now have raised access points to facilitate easier access. There is no data available to indicate what position RCT is in Wales due to the effects of the Covid pandemic. A further £440k is being expended on bus borders this year.

As part of the Highways Investment Programme the Council continues to invest in the provision of dropped kerbs and tactile crossings throughout the borough, concentrating on areas of high footfall.

In order to keep our town centres pedestrian friendly and accessible the Street Café Permit Scheme in Pontypridd and Aberdare has continued and been re-evaluated to provide, where possible, further areas for outdoor eating as a result of the Covid pandemic and to promote a café culture. This has been a success and well received by access groups due to the layouts and barriers complying with strict specifications.

The A4119 dualling project will also include a 3 metre wide Active Travel compliant footbridge with both steps and ramped access areas which will accommodate users of all mobility to be able to safely cross the A4119 at Coed Ely.

The service area has continued to assess the major Active Travel routes within the borough and have removed barriers from the Porth Community Route, Church Village Bypass Community Route, Taf Trail and Cynon Trail. This will ensure that access to these routes can be gained by the public with mobility issues.

LEISURE, SPORT AND PARKS, BEREAVEMENT SERVICES & HERITAGE AND VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

Leisure, Sport and Parks

The service strives to be inclusive and offers the following:

- All refurbishment works are accessible and will include gender neutral facilities and family changing areas where possible.

- Leisure products are offered specifically for veterans, foster families, and carers.

- We deliver the Welsh Government free swim initiative.

- We promote initiatives from Stonewall and the Terence Higgins Trust such as the rainbow laces.

- Facilities display the LGBTQIA+ flag promoting inclusivity and non-discrimination.

- Facilities provide opportunities for gateway to employment students to have work experience and job opportunities.

- The Leisure for Life membership scheme includes a reduced rate for specific protected characteristics.

- Targeting inequalities is the biggest driver for sport. Focus on intervention for women and girls and socio-economic deprivation as well as health intervention programmes. A range of case studies were developed as part of the evaluation of projects.

- Working with vulnerable residents will continue to be a priority for the team. Initiatives will focus on supporting vulnerable residents to be active in a wide variety of settings.

- We have linked with Sight Life to review how the leisure centres can implement changes to support visually impaired customers.

- Leisure Services have attended the Older Persons Forums offering free day passes to help with customer confidence and any timetable queries. Staff have taken small group fitness sessions and given advice sessions to help with their fitness goals.

Bereavement Services

This service prides itself in having practises to ensure equality and diversity. The service caters for a wide range of religions including short notice burials. Both chapels are fitted with a hearing loop. Roadside graves are kept for families that require disabled access.

Heritage and Visitor Attractions

- Staff have attended autism awareness training and provide autism friendly visits.

- Staff have attended Dementia Friendly training.

- The service has installed changing places facilities at the 3 visitor attractions and undertaken an independent disabled access audit and produced access statements on all three attraction's websites.

- Tomos Churchill, a Ranger in Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, has achieved an Engage to Change Participant Award from Learning Disability Wales.

- Playgrounds continue to undertake an independent accessibility review of all play facilities.

- The team continue to consult with local groups that provide opportunities for children with disabilities to better understand local needs, for example quiet sessions in play areas targeting children with autism and the provision of inclusive play equipment.

- All Community Centres are now accessible.

- The centres offer a diverse programme of activities for all residents.

- Centres are situated in economically deprived communities and offer affordable local opportunities for all.

PUBLIC PROTECTION AND REGULATORY SERVICES

The Registrar Service offers an out of hours and emergency service in respect of certain religious burial requirements, and the conducting of marriages where one of the party is terminally ill or aged.

This service is now able to offer 'signed' services, and our first signed ceremony is booked for 2023.

The Trading Standards and Registrar Services Managers are taking part in a trial of a race and equality mentoring project, involving 14 people across the UK, led by the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers.

Allergen Resources (electronic leaflets and videos) for Food Standards are available in 14 languages which are used by officers as part of ongoing inspection work and shared via social media at relevant intervals throughout the year. This ensures better understanding of complex legal requirements which can have potentially life-threatening results if not correctly followed.

A review into the availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV) in the taxi trade has been conducted and proposals that will help the trade to increase the number of WAV brought into service has been implemented.

Fair and equal access to low cost Pest Control is being evaluated to assess possible options to improve uptake for low income families due to concern members of these households are not able to access this public health service.

INTEGRATED TRANSPORT UNIT

The Service seeks to provide residents and businesses with the assistance they need at the first point of contact, encouraging greater access to online services and support.

Free bus travel for the elderly and disabled ensures that the service is inclusive. All residents over 60 are entitled to receive a concessionary bus pass and 48,645 in total take up this offer. A further 5,582 passes are issued to those who have a disability or need a companion to assist them when travelling.

Taking on board feedback from the Local Access Group, the Service has secured funding from a number of sources to undertake corridor-based bus stop enhancements, as well as meeting a number of specific local requests. The work involves the installation of new shelters (where footway space permits), new bus stop poles and flags, new raised kerbs to provide step free entry onto the buses, resurfacing of the passenger waiting area and renewal of bus stop road markings.

The investment in bus stop infrastructure has been significant in the past decade, helping it to have 764 of its bus stops equipped with accessible raised kerbs by the end of 2022.

Keeping the borough moving, the Service delivers improvements to roads, pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality, all of which make it easier for shoppers to visit town centres using public transport or active travel. It is also exploring opportunities to develop a cycle network to major destinations in the borough without impeding main traffic routes.

In order to address resident's concerns about indiscriminate parking making it difficult for buses to stop close to the kerb and impeding the free flow of traffic, mobile camera enforcement has been successful in keeping pedestrian crossings, school entrances and bus stops clear of unlawfully parked vehicles.

Improvements such as new crossings, developments and road safety features ensure that the highways network, and safe walking routes, is constantly evolving. These changes affect entitlement to free school transport and therefore it is prudent to periodically review the impact of such changes and update individual eligibility.

The Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport provision is tailored to the individual needs of the learner by a specialist team within the Service, and reflects the physical make-up of the community, with 930 of the 12,130 transported learners (7.69%) having additional learning needs. Throughout the year, further drivers and passenger assistants received special training in autism and epilepsy awareness, first aid, and understanding and managing strategies to support challenging behaviour.

Over a number of years, the Service has worked with the YEPS and the Transition Team within Community Care and Children's Services to provide independent travel

training to assist people of all ages, abilities and needs that do not have road safety awareness or awareness of travelling unaccompanied on public transport.

Participants of a Council run Management Development programme looked at the travel training provision within the Council and concluded that current programmes were disjointed, with no cohesive direction or collaboration. Further work was undertaken and an "Invest to Save" Business Case was approved by Cabinet in December 2021 to employ an Independent Travel Training Co-ordinator within the Integrated Transport Unit to collaborate with other departments, set up a generalised referral system and training programme throughout the Authority, and identify suitable individuals who would benefit from travel training.

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 2021-2022 there were 379 bookings made through the service using 28 languages and BSL interpreters.

The five most requested languages during 2021-2022 were Urdu, Polish, Tamil, Mandarin, and Turkish.

DELIVERY OF COUNCIL STRATEGIES

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

The Council continues to develop and increase engagement though 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 have continued our conversation on Climate Change through a number of projects, including Let's Talk EV, Let's Talk Wildflowers, Let's Talk Trees and 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).   In addition, Let's Talk was used for projects on Leisure services, Pontypridd Regeneration Strategy and the Local Development Plan.

During 2022, we supported or managed a large number of services with their consultation and engagement activities and supported a number of face-to-face engagement events.

Examples of how residents and communities have been involved in the Council's work in 2022 include:

- Engaging with residents on our budget consultation;

- Engaging with Schools and young people via Instagram and in school settings;

- Continued engagement and involvement with residents and communities in matters that affect them so that their voices are heard in Council decisions;

- Continued engagement with the Older People's Advisory Group about issues that could support their ability to get out and about. We have a joint SLA agreement with Age Connects Morgannwg and Older Peoples' Advisory Group to support and engage with older people in RCT;

- We provided a freepost and telephone option for those who cannot engage digitally, in addition to our face-to-face approach;

- We linked in with other services whilst undertaking our face-to-face events, from joining up consultations, to providing waste bags and advice and information;

- We have continued to use online and social media engagement as one of our methods to obtain resident views and promote consultations;

- Continued to make our consultations more accessible to residents, by increasing the use and availability of easy to read materials. Training our staff in the production of plain English materials;

- Further developed the use of digital engagement, through increasing the use of social media and videos.

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.

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

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

Objective 2   To reduce inequalities that exist within our communities;

Objective 3   To promote safe communities;

Objective 4   To reduce the gender pay gap;

Objective 5   To create an inclusive workforce.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Community Cohesion

The Cohesion team made connections with a number of groups including Aberdare Mosque, Friends of Bosnia Group, HOPE, Interlink Youth Group, MIND, Neighbourhood Networks, Pay What you feel Café, People 1st, Project Unity, Spectacle Theatre Group, St Catherine's Church, Valley's Ethnic Minority Support, Welcome to our Woods.

As well as working with community groups, the team were involved with a number of events and initiatives as outlined below:

Covid Engagement with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community members

We worked with Interlink's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic engagement worker to complete a program of extensive engagement work, which involved visiting the majority of takeaway and convenience stores in all RCT town centres. The purpose of this piece of work was to encourage take up of the Covid vaccine and learn why a lower percentage of people taking up the offer of a vaccine were part of the minority ethnic communities. The work gave the team widespread contacts with town centres and the wider community.

Autism 1st

We met with staff from Autism Life and successfully supported them to apply for funding for a gardening project. The project allowed members to profit from the therapeutic benefits of gardening, as well as allowing other allotment owners the opportunity to meet and grow with people who are on the autistic spectrum. Thus, increasing integration and decreasing isolation and exclusion.

Interfaith week

An event was arranged with Cynon Valley Museum with involvement from Swansea University, local schools, and colleges to mark interfaith week. The aim was to hold a series of discussions with faith leaders and the community. However, due to the reintroduction of Covid restrictions this had to be cancelled. However, we continued to educate pupils and young people through workshops, ultimately holding an art competition.

The competition involved school and college pupils submitting a piece of work - art, a poem, short story, or photograph that depicted what faith meant to them. The competition was extremely popular and the winner, runner up and 3rd place were chosen by a local leader of the Sikh community. The hope was that this would open a space for conversation, but unfortunately restrictions meant that couldn't happen on this occasion.

International Women's Day (IWD)

An event was held with Cynon Valley Museum to celebrate IWD. The event included a talk about Elaine Morgan and a panel discussion chaired by Rhian Hall, and three panellists representing business, arts and politics. The event created a safe place for women to come together and share experiences, this opened good communication links between the Cohesion team and local women.

Jewish History Trail

We worked with local historian and author Dr Darry Leeworthy to curate, promote and run a Jewish history walking trail in Pontypridd. This allowed us to develop connections with people of the Jewish community as well as those keen to support the Jewish history connection of the borough.

LGBTQ History Month Event

An event was held at Cynon Valley Museum to celebrate LGBTQ history month. The event included a session from academics, a reading of a play and finished with a contemporary dance performance from the Welsh Ballroom Company.

Operation Betsy

We worked with South Wales Police to hold a number of engagement events looking to engage with older people and put in place safeguarding or befriending support as required.

RCT People 1st

The team worked closely with People 1st on a number of projects:

- RCT People 1st roadshows – a series of in person events with the aim of increasing confidence of members when reintegrating into the community.

- Community safety film – a series of films looking at the barriers faced by those with a learning disability when accessing the community. From this came numerous concerns around disability hate crime and subsequently (post 2021-2022) the 'be my voice' campaign.

- Safe places – the initial planning stages of implementing safe places across RCT took place during 2021-2022.

Safeguarding week

The Cohesion team held a session at Coleg Y Cymoedd, establishing links with the learners. This event concentrated on educating pupils of the emerging increase in spiking, including needle spiking. We were able to provide learners with bottle stoppers and information on how to keep themselves and peers safe.

Self Defence Classes

We held self-defence classes for girls, creating a safe line of communication between women and girls and the community safety department. This was important as 2021 saw an increase in distrust between young women and the police.

Treorchy Diversity Group

In late 2021 the Cohesion team were introduced to Treorchy Comprehensive School Diversity Group. The group initially began as a 'safe place' lunch club for any pupil who felt they would benefit from a safe place within the school. However, the space quickly became a meeting place for pupils who identified as LGBT or allies of peers who are LGBT. From the 100+ group of pupils a smaller more focused 'leadership group' emerged, this consisted of a few (mostly 6th Form) pupils who wanted to take a more active role in raising awareness of LGBT and wider diversity issues. From this grew a book club, film club, newsletter, and peer-to-peer workshops. The Cohesion team began work with the group including the development of the Youth Ambassador Program, which was launched in April 2022.

COUNCIL'S DISABILITY FORUM

Telephone and digital communication has been maintained with all members of the Disability Forum this year. This has been an important link for our Forum members to discuss any concerns they have, and an opportunity to discuss their wellbeing.

While we continue to face challenges holding fully accessible face-to-face meetings due to a number of reasons, including on-going restrictions as a result of the Covid pandemic, we are hopeful that regular face-to-face meetings and communication will be able to resume in some capacity towards the end of the year. Digital or online meetings have not been possible due to a number of factors, including digital exclusion of some members and the accessibility of online platforms. Work is on-going to review the Disability Forum is as effective and helpful that it can be.

Veterans and Armed Forces Community

Veteran Advice Service

Funding was secured through the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund to continue our Veteran Advice service, which provides dedicated advice and support to the Armed Forces community. Since launching the service in 2019 over a 1000 referrals have been received. Some of the support provided includes: Housing, Adult Social Care, Benefits, Finances and Employment. During the pandemic the service has adapted to provide online virtual support to members of the Armed Forces community.

Veterans Connected project

We launched the Veterans Connected project 2021 following a successful bid for funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund: Forces For Change programme. Through this project Veterans can hire mobile device tablets, headsets, keyboard, and free mobile data. The tablets have been supplied by Centerprise International and are regularly used by veterans in Rhondda Cynon Taf as part of the Veterans Connected Project.

This project has help Veterans to stay in touch with family, and social connections through digital technology, and has helped improve well-being by reducing social isolation. Working in partnership with our neighbouring Council authorities, this project has been delivered across 4 local authorities in South East Wales.

Armed Forces Covenant Gold Employer Recognition Award

In 2022 we successfully retained the Armed Forces Covenant Gold Employer recognition award for its continued support of the Armed Forces community, past and present, and their families. The Council's highly prestigious Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award has been revalidated as the local authority continues to encourage employers and employees to support the Armed Forces and its community and inspire others to do the same.

In January 2022, the Council strengthened its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant by introducing a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Veterans and Reservists. This commitment is to guarantee an interview to any veterans or reservists that meet the essential criteria set out in the job profile for roles that are advertised. The Council recognises that veterans and reservists 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.

We worked closely with external parties and 3rd sector organisations' to establish a stronger understanding of the number of refugees living in the borough. This included working with social landlords, Valleys Ethnic Minority Support and the University of South Wales. The aim was to identify the number of people seeking sanctuary as well as identifying support that was available, including ESOL classes and friendship groups .

An educational film was produced in partnership with Dr Mike Chick with the support of the Welsh Refugee Council, with the aim of raising awareness of the plight of people seeking sanctuary, as well as increase awareness of the Welsh

Government's, (and more locally the University of South Wales's) commitment to becoming a place of sanctuary for those fleeing persecution or discrimination.

The Summer of 2021 welcomed a number of Afghan families to RCT. Although these families were part of the resettlement scheme, the work involved liaising with groups and community members who worked to support refugees who were not part of the scheme. This again led to increased knowledge of the potential numbers of refugees in RCT who were not part of the scheme. We worked with charity groups, church groups and individual members of the community who sought to make the transition for refugees more manageable.

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

Welsh Government (WG) priorities during 2021-2022 which informed our CfW+ delivery plan, continued to engage with specific customer groups with the aim of meeting the WG target of 20% of our clients gaining employment had a work limiting health condition or disability. 15% of participants achieved at year end, target 20% - actual number of 113 did exceed the target number of 50 due to engagement numbers exceeding target set.

ESF CfW employment support programme specifically targets people who are long term unemployed (12 months+) or economically inactive and young people who are not in education or training. The programme is also geographically targeted to people living in previously designated Communities First areas.

Between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022 CfW+ engaged with:

1,385 people - 349 young people (25%), 1,038 Adults 25+ (75%)

Ethnicity of participants:

English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British (96%)	1329	Indian	0
Irish	0	Pakistani	0
Gypsy / Traveller / Romany	1	Bangladeshi	1
Dual Heritage - White & Black Caribbean	3	Chinese	0
Dual Heritage - White & Black African	2	African	0
Dual Heritage - White & Asian	4	Caribbean	1
Other White Background	22	Arab	1
Other Dual Heritage Background	1	Any Other Ethnic Group	19

269 (19.4%) of those people engaged were recorded as having a disability or work limiting health condition.

The number of CfW+ clients into employment during 2021-2022 totalled 748 (54% of those engaged), 238 of these clients were young people aged 16-24yrs (32%) and 512 were Adults aged 25+ (68%).

However, if you compare the number of job entries to the number engaged under each age category: (349 young people and 1,038 Adults 25+) 66% of young people and 49% of adults went into employment.

Kickstart programme

At the end of 2021, DWP launched the Kickstart grant funded scheme and RCT Council applied to become a Gateway for that programme, supporting local businesses to access funding and provide paid work placement opportunities to young people.

Case Study

We received a referral for a 22 year old participant with a hearing disability who required support with seeking employment after a long period of mental health issues.

We worked with the participant to update their CV, provided support with writing cover letters and undertook mock interviews to ensure they were prepared.
We also researched available support for people entering employment with disabilities and made them aware of funding available through the Access to Work scheme which helps with the costs of any necessary adjustments required in a place of employment.

The participant successfully gained employment.

During their teenage years they suffered complete hearing loss in one ear and 80% loss in the other. This had left them suffering with severe anxiety and depression and more recently had starting self-harming. They received GP support and were referred to the CfW+ program by the Wellbeing Co-ordinator to enable them to access support to gain employment.

They had worked briefly a few months prior to this but the work was unsuitable and having to leave the job had left them feeling even more anxious and depressed and the self-harming had escalated.

We initially met with the participant and their mother at the local Job Centre Plus (JCP) office as telephone contact was not possible due to the hearing disability. We had a lengthy discussion about the barriers faced by the participant. They supplied me with a copy of their CV which detailed extensive qualifications and highlighted their genius level IQ. They stated they lacked confidence to apply for jobs and constantly doubted they could maintain regular employment due to their disability but were determined to try and overcome these barriers.

Our initial meeting established noisy and extremely busy working environments would not be suitable, so we concentrated on administration positions available through the Kickstart scheme.

They expressed interest in vacancies involving outdoor activities as they felt they may benefit their mental health. They agreed to apply for 2 kickstart vacancies so I informed the work coach who sent links to them to begin the application process. At the participants request I drafted a cover letter and condensed their CV to be submitted to Transport for Wales for an IT assistant vacancy. I also informed them about the funding available through the Access to Work scheme which helps with costs related to reasonable adjustments required in a workplace to accommodate employees with disabilities.

Shortly after, they emailed me to confirm an interview had been offered and would be conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams. They were extremely nervous as they had never used Teams before and had never had a formal job interview. I arranged a Teams meeting and drafted a list of interview questions to practice with them a few days prior to the interview. They prepared well and answered all questions clearly and concisely, there were no issues using Teams and they stated they felt much more confident after our session.

Less than 24 hours after the interview the participant confirmed they had secured a job offer which they accepted.

Good Practice Shared / Lessons Learned

Collaborative working with the Job Centre Plus youth work coaches ensured prompt access to relevant Kickstart vacancies.

There is excellent support available for people with disabilities to access to ensure working conditions can be tailored to accommodate any reasonable adjustments that may be required.

Outcomes

The participant secured a Kickstart position working 25 hours as an IT assistant with Transport for Wales

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.

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 was due to be completed by March 2022, however this has been extended to be completed by December 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.

As was highlighted in previous Annual Reports, an equality monitoring toolkit has been developed for use by all service areas in the Council. The toolkit has been developed following best practice examples and guidelines, and highlights the importance of equality monitoring and the possible uses for data. The toolkit also contains best practice advice that should be followed when conducting monitoring, including advice on theorder of questions, wording and response options. We are hopeful that this toolkit will be published in the Summer of 2022.

In developing the toolkit, we have also been able to give advice and guidance to a number of public-facing service areas on how best to implement or improve equality monitoring in their services. Examples of this include:

- Empty Homes Grant scheme;

- Recruitment forms;

- Theatre booking systems;

- Customer Satisfaction Surveys;

- RCT's Local Access Forum.

Where equality data is collected as part of a grant scheme, this data is reported to Welsh Government as part of their analysis into whether grant funding has been used in line with the programme's requirements.

We have also begun work with the Council's Consultation and Engagement team to ensure that equality monitoring questions and data are routinely collected and used

in public consultations. This work is ongoing and will mean that data is being analysed to better understand the impacts of proposals on residents, and the needs and demands residents have for services.

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.

Data regarding the number of individuals registered with Homefinder who required adapted properties was extracted from our Civica system. This has highlighted a large number of applicants who require an accessible or a fully adapted property. Steps will be taken in 2022-2023 to review this data and to use it to inform a task and finish group looking at adapted housing as part of the Allocation Scheme review. This will be an ongoing piece of work which we aim to complete in April 2024. Part of this review will evaluate customer experience of the Homefinder process.

Action 9 - Improve and develop monitoring of customer complaints.

This period has continued to provide challenges due to the ongoing impact of Covid and it is unclear as to how this has impacted on some services and customer interaction, with the overall level of customer feedback over the reporting period being significantly less than previous years.

Recorded compliments are consistent with previous years although remain an area for improvement along with improving mechanisms for capturing customer comments which will be a focus for 2022-2023. Work has already begun within service areas to improve how customer comments are captured and how developments and improvements can be fed back as part of the development of 'you said, we did'.

Service areas and Complaints Co-ordinators have throughout the period and despite the presented challenges, continued to effectively manage customer contacts and complaints, although overall complaints handling performance has reduced with the number of Stage 1 complaints being resolved within 10 working days standing at 53%, compared to 61% in 2020-2021.

The number of feedback Items received are lower than previous years and remain less than 1.5% of overall customer contacts. Overall, customer contacts to the Council have increased by 0.6% but remain significantly lower than pre-pandemic figures. Numbers of direct telephone contacts to the Council have fallen by 38% in contrast to e-mail and social media contacts which remain higher than pre-pandemic figures and may signify a permanent change in how customers wish to interact with the Council.

The Customer Feedback and Engagement team will continue to monitor customers interaction with the Council to ensure that the Customer Feedback Scheme offers a varied range of options that provide customers opportunity to feedback on services and make suggestions for improvements. The team will also continue to review and consider learning identified by other Councils through Ombudsman case books and direct contact with complaints officers across Wales and through regional and national forums.

Work on the implementation of a new complaints management system has been delayed due to other priorities however it is hoped that this will be fully implemented by April 2023.

The delay in implementation has afforded the opportunity for co-ordinators across all service areas to consider how any new system can best meet the needs of the service and provide improved information from which we can continue to better understand the needs of our communities and improve service delivery.

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

The **Youth Engagement and Participation Service** (YEPS) has continued to utilise a range of methods to deliver youth work services in 2021-2022 including the provision of information advice and assistance to young people to promote their participation and engagement. The table below shows the Youth Engagement and Participation Service's 'reach' (number of individual young people engaged in open access activities organised by, and receiving one to one support from, the service) and the number of contacts the service made with anonymous young people during street based youth work sessions delivered during the year:

Annual reach 2021-2022			
11-13yrs			3240
14-16yrs			2963
17-19yrs			88
20-25yrs			152
TOTAL			**7235**
Number of anonymous contacts 2021-2022			
2021-2022			12930
Reach by age 2021-2022			
	% population	**Welsh average**	**Variance**
11-16yrs	36.6%	n/a	n/a
11-19yrs	28.6%	20%	+8.6%

In 2021-2022 the Service engaged with 28.6% of young people aged 11-19yrs, performing 8.6% above the National Welsh Average.

The Council has invested in mobile youth vehicles, utilising core and grant funding to act as hubs in localities where access to a suitable permanent venue is not available. The vehicles are used as mobile youth clubs; as the base for community activities like fun days and street-based youth work; as well as a hub for use at times when an immediate response is required within a community, such as following a serious incident that requires enhanced youth work support. The mobile vehicles proved invaluable during the pandemic, offering a safe space for young people and support for the street-based work.

YEPS uses numerous ways to communicate with young people, parents/carers and community members such as emails, text messaging, posters, leaflets, social media platforms and an app which was launched in 2022. The YEPS website, was rebranded as YEPSWales in 2022 aligning with the new app and continues to provide access information, advice and guidance for young people around a number of themes such as money management, travel etc. The website usage data is monitored monthly with 3,300 users having accessed the website in October 2021 alone. YEPS information is also shared on the Dewis website, Family Information Service website and secondary school websites.

YEPS now also has a Youth Officer solely responsible for developing digitalisation and promotion, supported by a Social Media Champion in each cluster. Young people have been at the heart of the development of the app, which has transformed user engagement and improved service delivery; as well as promoting the service and its activities and support on offer, the app enables parents and guardians to complete consent forms for off-site activities.

The service now has 4 social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snap chat with 3,045 Facebook followers, 2,397 Instagram followers and 1,481 Twitter followers in 2021-2022. The YEPS Youtube channel has had 12,574 views in 2021-2022. The service has also live streamed events and meetings with young people, such as those that take place with the County Youth Forum, which have proven successful.

The **Family Information Service** plays a key role in disseminating information to service users and families. Analysis of the online traffic across the Family Information Service social media channel during the pandemic showed a significant engagement in online support with 38,523 views / 32,690 unique viewers of online parenting videos and 44,287 views / 36,040 unique viewers of online early language videos. We have continued to promote the Facebook pages and videos this year and the online parenting and early language videos have increased by 9,000 views in the period April 2021-April 2022.

This informs us that social media is still a popular channel to access parenting support and we aim to create more informative videos for both Facebook and the new RCT Families Website. The Virtual Parenting Support Officer is responsible for building appropriate online content to ensure that all families will have access to the same support, advice, and guidance from the Parenting Team irrespective of the method of delivery removing any barriers to inclusion and engagement.

Work on the **RCT Families Website** has continued with the website due to be launched in the summer of 2022. This single public facing website will be a one stop shop for information related to children, young people and families.
It will provide an important single point of access for information, advice and signposting for children, young people, parents, community members and practitioners to the range of support on offer, providing the means for members of the public to meet their own information advice and assistance needs.

The new delivery model for **Parenting** that commenced September 2021 has been implemented well with informal parenting support and formal parenting programmes providing information and support being delivered by a range of commissioned partners throughout RCT. This is supported by a spot purchasing commissioning model utilising approved suppliers. In establishing approved supplier lists to support the spot purchasing of parenting support provision, the Commissioning Team have been developing sustainable procurement of local community-based groups to support the Council to meet the needs of families within their own communities. This supports the principles of both the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

The three **Children and Family Centres** re-opened fully in 2021-2022 following the pandemic offering a focal point in the community for access to information advice and assistance in relation to family support, childcare, parenting, play and youth services.

The YEP service has been proactive in **consulting with young people** throughout the year. 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 Your Voice survey is due to be undertaken in the Autumn 2022.

The Participation strategy for the YEP Service has been redeveloped as a result of feedback from young people involved in our **Youth Forum** work. The feedback has resulted in the locality fora being replaced with thematic area fora. These include:

- Equality & Diversity

- Community Safety

- Mental Health & Wellbeing

- Environment & Sustainability

Young people believe these groups will have a greater impact on the work they can achieve and that these thematic areas tackle the greatest needs for 11–25 year olds across RCT.

Details of Forum work undertaken in 2021-2022

Equality & Diversity

This forum is now well established with good numbers attending forum meetings. The voices of young people have contributed to several key developments/projects, such as:

- An RCT wide survey indicated the desire for safe social spaces for LQBTQ+ young people, which resulted in the creation of a new LQBTQ+ forum; this subsequently led to the establishment of a support group in Aberdare Community School and weekly drop-in sessions at Cynon Linc

- Project work as part of a Pride Art competition

- A Sexual Health workshop in partnership with Cwm Taf Health Board

- Working with Lili Pad to create a short film about LGBTQ+ experiences across RCT, which was showcased to Stonewall and partners.

Community Safety

- Members of the Community Safety group attended The Police and Crime Commissioners Young Voices Regional Forum to hear feedback about how their suggestions are being put into action, i.e., more methods of contacting the police through texting for example, discussions of the importance of body language and developing positive relationships between the police and young people. Forum members worked with police, the police and crime commissioner and other partners to identify better ways of working with the police, identifying areas causing concern such as knife crime, young people reporting crimes and knowing your rights

- As part of this forum, young people wrote a poem with Safer Wales and external poet about Covid

- Forum members have been heavily involved in Interlink and Safer Wales consultations which have been successful and enjoyed by young people.

<u>Mental Health & Wellbeing</u>

- Forum members voiced the importance of raising awareness of mental health issues and the possibility of creating promotional material advising of coping strategies. Consequently, the forum focused on carrying out consultations with other young people regarding a mental health animation project which is currently underway and due to be completed in April 2023.

- Young people nominated YEPS for an award which they won: Mental Health and Wellbeing Award, Community Saints: Youth Development Award.

<u>Environment & Sustainability</u>

- Environment and Sustainability group had a successful day during October half term doing a litter pick in Ynysangharad Park. 20 young people took part as they highlighted this as an area where young people like to gather and can "create a mess". They wanted to "give something back" to the area and took part in a litter pick for 2 and a half hours

- The YEPS leader for this forum sits on Climate Change Working group as the representative from YEPS, whereby they attend quarterly meetings with other employees from across the Council who feed back any work and information they have on environmentally positive and sustainable work going on throughout the county borough. YEPS' presence in this group is to feedback the work of the forum and provide a voice from young people, whilst helping with engagement of young people in any consultations other departments of the Council may want/need.

OBJECTIVE 2 – To reduce inequalities that exist within our communities

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

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

Work to improve the recruitment process has been completed, although much work was delayed due to Covid priorities and the new iTrent HR and Payroll system implementation, which includes a new e-recruitment system.

In particular, key actions on hold include:

- New manager recruitment guidance which includes information on recruitment and diversity. A draft guidance document has been produced, it will need to

be reviewed following the build of the new recruitment system and amended accordingly. Recruitment system guidance will also be produced.

- Streamlining of recruitment processes as the new system may impact key processes. The review to streamline recruitment processes is on hold until the system goes live, some work towards this may be undertaken as required as part of the new recruitment system build.

Key aspects of the recruitment plan which have been implemented include the [recruitment website/microsite](#) going live and the recruitment of a Graduate Officer to specialise in recruitment marketing to ensure that more people are aware of our job vaccancies. They will support service areas with recruitment marketing, including utilising social media for advertising and promotion, along with developing a strong employer brand to attract candidates.

Other pilots relating to the plan have had some success, for example increasing return of exit interviews in Children's Social Services to help gather data to aid staff retention and a recent marketing campaign implemented March 2022, led by Children's Social Services to recruit social workers.

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 in the Summer of 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.

Staying Well at Work (formerly Develop Invest & Grow) led by RCT and part funded by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government 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 Wellbeing and businesses to manage employees with disabilities/work limiting health conditions.

The Project sought to re-profile early on in its delivery due to initial delays in its start-up and this was to be considered following a period of 12 months delivery to allow time for the Project to recover in line with the agreed targets.

In February 2020 Rhondda Cynon Taf was affected by Storm Dennis and in March 2020, the worldwide Covid pandemic created unprecedented challenges and as a direct result all re-profile requests were further delayed.

Consequently, it is evident that the Project will not recover to such a point as to be in line with the WEFO approved business plan and as such preliminary financial impact assessments have been completed internally to RCTCBC.

Given this, a new structure and delivery model was proposed which sought to deliver the service change and revised outputs in light of the continued Covid pandemic and the impact that has had on the projects ability to engage and meet the project targets.

- Service review was implemented with effect from 2 April 2021.

- All operations were moved to a combination of virtual, RCT building locations and Community hubs for delivery.

- Employee participant appointments continue to be delivered via video platforms and telephone, where client digital access is limited.

- Employee participant face to face interventions have continued and increased since April and as restrictions have eased.

<u>The outcomes delivered</u>

Over the course of the project, to the end of March 2022, 120 SME participants have enrolled with the project, 104 have been through internal compliance checks and are

eligible for the project, 16 have been compliance rejected and are therefore ineligible for the project.

72 SME enterprises received direct support from the project, up until 31st March 2022 to encourage a cultural change in organisations towards a more diverse and healthier workforce and the adoption of flexible working practices.

Employers were supported to improve flexibility within the workplace and encouraged to adopt flexible work practices, as well as adopting or improving equality and diversity strategies and monitoring systems. Activities with employers includes promoting the benefits a healthy workplace can bring to an organisation, addressing health related issues within the workforce and develop or improve appropriate work place or occupational health programmes.

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

72 participants have completed the project and recorded outcomes against the project indicators, of which 29 were early leavers, and 3 are still actively engaged in the project.

Table 1a

01. Adoption or improvement of HR and Health & Safety Policy that supports and monitors attendance and wellbeing in the workplace	42
02.Adoption or improvement of an Absence Management Policy	30
03. Adoption or improvement of Equalities and Diversity Policies and/or procedures in place which make reference to the Equality Act 2010	42
04. Adoption or improvement of systems and/or procedures that support flexibility in the	7
05. Adoption or Improvement of Assessments and/or Monitoring Systems in place to support the Health and Wellbeing of Staff?	5
06. Adoption or Improvement of policy, procedure or intervention that supports health, work and wellbeing of employees.	45
07. Has the business adopted or improved systems to monitor the impact of work on health, for e.g. ergonomic assessment, health surveillance)?	2
08. Does the business now have training in place to promote health awareness and wellbeing	14
Early Leaver	29
No Outcome Recorded Yet	3

Workplace Health programmes

A total of 14 virtual Workplace health programmes and awareness training sessions and workshops were delivered during this period. These included topics such as Health & Wellbeing, Living and Working with Menopause and Conducting Investigations in the Workplace.

Employee Participant Activity

The support offered to participants has been more holistic and continues to be so, more in-depth and over a longer period of time than expected and as a consequence the impact on participants have been more far reaching and likely to have greater longevity as a result.

The project was designed to support mild/moderate conditions such as anxiety, however in reality, during delivery it quickly became apparent that participants have presented with far more complex issues than anticipated and the interventions provided by the clinical team has responded to this need.

Consequently, the duration of the client intervention period continues to be longer – the project was envisioned as a provider of short-term interventions, but many have engaged longer-term and accessed multiple interventions to deal with different issues.

Over the course of the project, to 31 March 2022, 444 employee participants have enrolled with the project.

329 employee Participants have engaged with the project to date. Of those, internal verification checks were completed and 192 have returned to work, 100 have remained in work. Of the 63 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.

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

Table 1b Reason for Referral

Reason	Participants	%
In Work Support	125	38%
Support Ret. to Work -28 Days	43	13%
Support Ret. to Work 28 Days+	161	49%
Total	329	100%

Table 1c Outcome

Outcome	Participants	%
Early Leaver	63	19%
NO-RTW 4 weeks after completion	18	5%
Remained in Work	100	30%
RTW - Different	3	1%
RTW - Same	142	43%
RTW 4 wks after completion	3	1%
Total	329	100%

Table 1d Characteristic Summary

	2021-2022 Cumulative Total	
Participant Breakdown	**Total**	**%**
Disabled/Disability	70	17.3%
Work Limiting Condition (Includes MSD & MH)	334	82.7%
Female	310	76.7%
Male	94	23.3%
Care / Child Responsibilities	116	28.7%
Over 54	158	39.1%
Migrant / Non EU	0	0.0%
BME	4	1.0%
Total Referrals	**404**	**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 2021-2022 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.

Through our Digital Strategy we are seeking to ensure that services are fully inclusive, easy to use and that no-one who wishes to participate is left behind. The Well-being and Future Generations Act – A more Equal Wales being a key driver for digital inclusion.

We 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. We will support all to become more confident to safely use technology and effectively adopt new ways of doing things.

Examples include:

- Working with our partners we supported the Cwm Taf Morgannwg MASH with a digital solution to manage referrals.

- Implementing a more joined up way for businesses to apply and provide evidence for business 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 and equipment, continuing to support ongoing work in relation to Schools digital strategy.

- Supporting the digital skills and inclusion agenda, with ICT & Digital playing a key role in supporting key initiatives such as Digital Bitesize, 'Digital Fridays' and Get online in RCT.

- Supporting access to digital, we provide free Public Wi-Fi 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 were refreshed with new devices during 2021-2022.

- Our website is continually being adapted to meet accessibility standards, including supporting 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](#) is also in progress. Our website accessibility rating has increased from 68% to 86% in 2021 and to 96% in 2022 on our Corporate Web presence. All new content is evaluated to ensure that accessibility standards are met prior to release.

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

This action will be addressed as part of the Allocation Scheme Review. A Task and Finish Group will be set up to look at Equality and Diversity. This group will review the current application to ensure it is accessible and that the data captured informs best practice.

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

We offer an award-winning **apprenticeship 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.

Gateway to Employment

In partnership with Coleg Y Cymoedd and Elite – we have worked with individuals with additional learning and physical needs providing supportive placements within the council. 6 currently on placement within the council. 1 secured employment within RCT Council and 1 secured employment with private organisation.

Access to Employment

This programme provides 12 months employed status programme for individuals furthest away from the labour market. 8 engaged on programme, 4 secured employment with the Council and 4 still on programme.

Step in the Right Direction

This 2 year traineeship programme is for Children Looked After.

2021-2022:

- 11 Trainees started on the programme

- 5 Employment outcomes (3 with RCT Council and 2 external employers)

- 10 Trainees undertook and successfully completed training

Care2work

This engagement programme is for Children Looked After:

- 136 referrals

- 22 secured employment

- 10 completed Training

- 4 started volunteering

Kickstart

Working in partnership with DWP we coordinate RCT Council internal kickstart placements. The Kickstart scheme was government funded and its aim was to provide 16-24 year olds at risk of becoming long term unemployed, the opportunity of 6 months paid work experience.

Outcomes:

- Interviewed over 100 eligible candidates

- Established 40 placement opportunities with RCT Council

- Successfully recruited 23 kickstart employees

- To date 50% of starters have secured employment.

[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. 7 Review Panels were held during 2021-2022 reviewing a number of high-levels strategies including the Digital Strategy and Education Strategic Plan. Feedback from the Review Panels has been positive enabling opportunities for learning and good practice to shared.

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

All Catering Services web pages have been updated to promote the uptake of eFSM with easy access hyperlinks for application. The Council's media team have shared social media messages promoting eFSM take-up.

School dinner menus have been adapted to encourage take up by extending choice to appeal to all tastes – this includes 'grab and go' and vegetarian options. Bespoke special diets have been created to ensure eFSM pupils with specific dietary requirements are not disadvantaged and cannot take up the meal. The importance of protection of anonymity has been reinforced throughout the Catering Services workforce which help with breaking down barriers/stigma to application.

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 sets out a number of key service priorities for 2021-2022, one of which includes to:

Modernise our town centres – by building on their role as centres for social inclusion, local economic opportunity and the provision of services. By recognising their changing role from retail centres to social destinations and helping them to adapt to changes in economic and customers' expectations.

In supporting the delivery of local economic activities whilst promoting social inclusivity the Council have continued to engage with a variety of groups and stakeholders in delivering new projects and initiatives across our town centres and to seek their views on implementing appropriate and timely measures.

1. The Council engaged in early informal consultation to help inform a draft "Regeneration Strategy for Aberdare Town Centre". The exercise sought the views and opinions of a wide range of stakeholders from within Aberdare town centre and the wider communities it serves. In identifying and defining the town's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities and drawing upon local knowledge, such engagement ensures that local people have an opportunity

to shape and focus interventions aimed at addressing issues affecting them most. Early involvement also helps to foster a sense of local ownership and commitment to the successful implementation of the Strategy.

2. The Council delivered a comprehensive exercise to "Engage the Community in Porth" in an exercise to explore the potential for collaborative actions between business and with other stakeholders, including the Council, cultural and community organisations, town centre users and property owners. The exercise explored a social and cultural regeneration approach that supports the existing and more physically focused Porth Town Centre Regeneration Strategy adopted by the Council in 2018, to deliver a more holistically focused regeneration approach. The exercise has delivered a new "Opportunity Porth" stakeholder group and a series of milestones to inform future priorities for the group that will benefit the town and the wider communities it serves.

3. The Council delivered a series of Christmas Events within 5 of its 8 town centres and worked collaboratively with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and Town and Community Councils to deliver an event in the 3 remaining town centres. The events provided individuals and families with an affordable festive celebration and delivered increased town centre footfall to support local businesses. The events were supported by free car parking in all Council town centre car parks and were well attended and positively received.

4. The Council have continued to work collaboratively with business groups and other stakeholders to deliver a range of projects and community focused events across our town centres. These include working collaboratively with the Our Aberdare BID to deliver a Summer programme of activities throughout Aberdare town centre and with the Love Treorchy BID to deliver the town's first Food & Drink Festival. Additional projects have delivered seasonal town centre floral displays, promotional videos and festive lighting.

5. The Council's Town Centre Team and Employment, Education & Training Team worked collaboratively with the Love Treorchy BID to deliver a pilot programme that provided a number of work placement opportunities for Children Looked After throughout Treorchy town centre. The programme, which supports the Council's commitment as a Corporate Parent was well received and delivered many benefits for both the young people and businesses that took part. The programme will be extended into other town centres in 2023.

OBJECTIVE 3 – TO PROMOTE SAFE COMMUNITIES

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

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

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 2021, 686 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	84
Race	332
Religion	47
Sexual Orientation	182
Transgender	38

Table 1b. Hate Crimes by area

Rhondda	198
Cynon	150
Taf	167
Merthyr	171

Table 1c. Hate Crimes by month (2019)

January	27
February	43
March	49
April	53
May	45
June	79
July	77
August	41
September	44
October	48
November	65
December	39

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. The Hate Crime Strategy was renewed and developed to reflect the shift in approach that had to be made during the pandemic. The Strategy is currently being reviewed to reflect current, (post pandemic) ways of working.

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

A Cwm Taf Morgannwg Modern Day Slavery (MDS) group has been established. Previously the MDS agenda sat within the Serious Organised Crime Group, which sits within the Community Safety Partnership meeting structure. There is currently an ongoing review of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Community Safety Partnership Board which this group would sit under.

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.

The PERMA tool is now being used across 95 schools in RCT and recent updates have allowed schools to create bespoke wellbeing groups and to also use a "mood tracker" to monitor emotional changes in pupils over time.

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

The Access and Inclusion teams' 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 local authority's 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.

We have completed a recent bullying survey with 1850 secondary aged pupils in RCT. The findings are being analysed and will be used to inform actions across the Authority.

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

Identifying domestic abuse at the earliest opportunity is key to keeping people safe. Our programmes provide 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. Programmes aim 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.

Course	Attendance 2021-2022
Freedom programme	129
Hope 2 recovery	40
Wellbeing	23
Recovery toolkit	30

Male victims

The programmes received 907 referrals but did not receive many male referrals during the period 2021-2022. We did have 15 male referrals, but they were supported by our lottery funded project in the Rhondda.

LGBTQ

The programmes supported 35 individuals who identified as LGBTQ+ during 2021-2022.

One to one

The Programmes provided 527 telephone support sessions and 210 drop in / face-to-face sessions. This was provided to individuals who needed tailored support not provided by group sessions.

Online

Online groups were implemented during Covid restrictions and local lockdowns but proved an effective method to engage with those with poor mental health (anxiety, depression, agoraphobia) and physical disabilities. Courses also reduced the financial costs of transport to attend groups and childcare issues.

Outcomes

- 100% 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.

- 100% stated that they felt increased confidence in their ability to create a safe environment for themselves and their family.

- 75% stated an increased knowledge of appropriate agencies from which they could receive support for their emotional and physical well-being.

- 95% stated they felt an increase in their confidence and self-esteem because of attending the sessions.

OBJECTIVE 4 – TO REDUCE THE GENDER PAY GAP

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

The Gender Pay Gap

An organisation's gender pay gap is the difference between the average male and female pay rates. It is calculated by dividing the average female hourly pay rate by the average male hourly pay rate.

The Council is required to publish the gender pay gap between male and female employees. It is also required to publish this data separately on employees in Education (teaching employees).

The Equality and Human Rights Commission strongly advise publishing separate full-time and part-time gender pay gaps. It is considered that any pay gap of 5% or more is considered significant and in need of further analysis.

The Equal Pay Audit identified the following Equal Pay gaps:

2022

	Combined	Full Time	Part Time
All Employees	10.24%	-9.61%	3.63%
Non Teaching	11.68%	-8.96%	2.98%
Teaching	4.19%	3.91%	5.05%

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.

Action 1 - Deliver the roll out of the performance review process for staff at all grades, and
Action 2 - Improve the monitoring of the performance review process.

The existing performance review process has been reviewed. Moving forward, the corporate process will be improved by ensuring that all corporate staff who have worked for the Council for 12 months or more will have received an annual performance review. The previous approach of rolling out the review a staff tier at a time was not effective as operationally, a rollout to all staff was never achieved.

Following the implementation of the new HR/Payroll system - iTrent, all managers will be expected to conduct reviews with their staff (in line with the Council's Training, Learning and Development Policy) and record compliance on the iTrent system, allowing for compliance to be monitored centrally. Previously service areas have been undertaking reviews outside the corporate process but there was no central/corporate monitoring mechanism. The Individual Performance Review cycle will align with the Council's Performance cycle and start on 1st April each year, ending on 31st March. It is anticipated this roll out will take place from April 2023, once the iTrent system has been fully embedded across the Council.

Guidance and templates for the Individual Performance Reviews will be created and available on the Council's RCT Source. The Chief Officer and Grade 15 Individual Performance Review Template will still be available, other staff will have a more generic template. There will also be training and briefings to launch the improved process.

HR staff are currently consulting with key service areas, with a focus on frontline services (due to a higher ratio of staff to managers and many staff not being on email), to understand their needs to support them with undertaking reviews and to increase engagement.

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

We launched and delivered our Women into Leadership programme, which was a series of themed events and follow-up panel discussions focusing on specific topics. Each event was themed and took delegates on a journey from recognising the 'new normal' that many in society now find themselves in, specifically leading virtually and the challenges this has brought through to dispelling barriers and myths that have inhibited women progressing previously. The programme then moved onto recognising the specific skills and perspectives that women have to offer and how they can contribute to senior level teams, decisions and projects with the final

component of the series covering what drives successful women when they have reached the pinnacle of their career.

The programme aimed to provide a platform for women throughout the Council, regardless of role or job grade to embrace the unique skills and perspectives women can bring to the work environment. Feedback received indicates that the programme has been both inspiring and empowering, with more women in the organisation feeling able to develop themselves to break the 'glass ceiling'. Already, the programme has contributed to some mentoring relationships being established, discussion continuing and informed some strategic priorities for the People Development Team such as developing formal coaching and mentoring programmes and implementing a formal process for staff to access senior leadership for their development by gaining experiential learning. It has also raised some unexpected yet important things to consider, such as how we may be able to better understand and support staff who identify outside of the gender binary.

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 is outlined below:

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

Work commenced on this project this year, initially focusing on research on good practice in the area. We have established a task and finish group to identify key actions and stakeholders. We are looking at preparing a staff survey to be circulated within 2022-2023 and we aim to have a policy and/or toolkit later in 2023.

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

This action shifted it's focus as the service had to reprioritise its delivery in response to the Covid pandemic. Therefore, a number of staff wellbeing initiatives were introduced which focus on mental health:

- Connect 5 - a programme that is designed to provide practical tools to enable everyone to have a conversation on mental health. Connect 5 was identified and piloted on a number of groups as a support for mental health. This has been evaluated as a programme and we hope to rollout out further as a Cwm Taf delivery model.

- Cari - an artificial intelligence system that enables staff to assess their own wellbeing score confidentially and provides a number of supports. This system enables the organisation to target specific interventions based on the data and provides an overall wellbeing score as an organisation.

- Wellbeing bitesize sessions have been developed and delivered on a range of topics such as sleep, menopause, anxiety, finances, wellbeing, women and mens health etc, these are evaluated individually. We utilise data from Cari, staff surveys, sickness trends and national research to develop these sessions.

- Carefirst is an employee assistance programme that delivers a range of wellbeing activities, including 24/7 access to in the moment support, an advice centre for financial and legal rights issues, website for online support and information on many health conditions, weekly webinars and an app that staff can use to monitor their mental health and gain interventions to support.

- Bespoke school counselling service.

- A staff Wellbeing helpline was introduced.

- Self-referrals for mental health and physiotherapy

- Elected member wellbeing sessions.

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

Work on this project is progressing with projected completion in Spring 2023. 9 identified bilingual e-Learning, Dignity at Work, Disability and Discrimination, Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace, Equality Act 2010, LGBTQIA+/Trans Awareness, Neurodiversity Awareness, Race Awareness, Reasonable Adjustments and Unconscious Bias modules have been created and will be piloted with staff, managers and staff networks. The internal learning and development platform 'RCT Source' will support the training material. Additional non digital resources will then be created to support 'Offline' learning through presented instruction and physical handouts for service areas that have limited access to IT systems.

Action 4 - Become more disability confident as an organisation.

The Council continue to be a Level 2 Disability Confident employer under the ['Disability Confident'](#) scheme. We have continued to work towards providing more accessible services for residents and customers, and supporting our disabled staff in the workplace. Part of this action has been developing staff awareness through training and awareness articles and signposting. Examples of this include:

- Developing and delivering 'digital accessibility' training to various teams across the authority, including the Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) Adult Education team.

- Working with the Business Disability Forum (BDF) to work towards becoming Disability Smart. The criteria for Disability Smart align with the 'Disability Confident' scheme so will allow us to progress in this scheme too.

- The Council are also members of the BDF and have worked with our Human Resources team to signpost the BDF helpline and resources and training available.

In March 2022 the [Autism Wales](#) Autism Awareness training was also approved for a trial with our Human Resources team starting in April 2022. If successful, the training will then be rolled out to all service areas across the Council, including to Elected Members and the Councils Senior Leadership Team.

We have also begun initial actions and work to develop our external Disability Forum to ensure it is sustainable and most effective for members. The Disability Forum is a positive space open to all residents of RCT with a disability, caring responsibility or an interest in disability issues in RCT. The Forum is a place for members to bring any concerns or questions they have to Council officers.

Action 5 - Undertake workplace equality monitoring.

As outlined in previous reports, an equality monitoring toolkit has been developed for all services in the Council to use. The toolkit highlights the importance of equality monitoring, the possible uses for data and best practice that should be followed when conducting monitoring. We are hopeful that this internal toolkit will be published in the Summer of 2022.

Following its implementation in late 2021, best practice equality monitoring fields have now been added to the new HR and Payroll system. These new fields mean that staff have the opportunity to be fully represented in their HR data, and gives the Council an opportunity to collect data on characteristics like non-binary identities, ethnicity and more. Following this implementation of new data fields, there will be a drive to obtain up-to-date staff information in Spring 2022.

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

In 2021-2022 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:

- Stephen Lawrence Day

- Lesbian Visibility Day

- Deaf Awareness Week

- International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia

- Carers Week

- Windrush Day

- World Mental Health Day

- Baby Loss Awareness Week

- International Pronouns Day

- World Menopause Day

- Black History Month

- Trans Awareness Week

- Carers Rights Day

- International Day of People with Disabilities

- International Women's Day

- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

- Transgender Day of Visibility

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

LGBTQIA+ inclusion

We consulted with our LGBTQ+ staff network and decided to raise the Progress Flag on LGBTQ+ specific days across the Council. We had 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 on all buildings across the Council 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.

In consultation with our LGBTQ+ staff network, we have looked at language around LGBTQ+ issues and adopted a new acronym as the staff network felt it would be more inclusive and welcoming to members of the community. The new acronym includes Intersex and Asexual people, making the new acronym used across Council documentation, LGBTQIA+.

We have also introduced, in a voluntary capacity, the use of pronouns in emails and presentations. This can send a powerful message of institutional inclusivity when viewed by members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

We have offered webinars and free events to our staff in relation to Bi Visibility and other LGBTQIA+ topics and shared resources, linking in with other authorities when relevant to increase awareness and committing to the larger LGBTQIA+ community in South Wales.

We are key partners of the Proud Councils partnership and through the works held during the pandemic, including online seminars, we have increased membership to the group with Powys County Council joining and we are talking to two other authorities about their membership.

In August 2021, Proud Councils ran a competition for young people aged 11-18 across Wales on the theme "Becoming Me" or "How adults can be allies of young LGBT+ people".

Menopause Cafes

Virtual Menopause cafes were launched and provide a space to learn more about menopause and what it's like to experience it. The cafes provide a space to discuss menopause problems and symptoms, and tips and solutions to help manage these.

Race Equality

As a Council, we recognised we needed to do more to further race equality in the workplace. During 2021-2022, we held a number of events to highlight Black history and improve cultural competence. These included:

- Black History and Beyond series exploring a number of areas such local Black history, Colonialism and racism.
- Windrush – an exploration of the Windrush generation
- A performance at Pontypridd Library of 'Call Mr Robeson' - By Tayo Aluko and friends.

In March 2022, Cabinet agreed to the Council signing the [BITC's Race at Work](#) Charter. This demonstrates the Council's commitment improving equality of opportunity in the workplace.

Senior Diversity Champions

In 2021 Senior Diversity Champions were appointed to further diversity and inclusion in the workplace. These are:

Chris Bradshaw Chief Executive	Race Equality
Dave Powell Director of Corporate Estates	Disability Inclusion
Gaynor Davies Director of Education	Gender Equality
Simon Gale Director of Prosperity and Development	LGBTQIA+ Inclusion

All champions have met with respective staff network members and participated in events and question and answer sessions as well as being a visible presence to promote equality and diversity.

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.

In May 2021 we held a Staff Networks Day event where a number of guest speakers came to talk to staff network members on the theme of togetherness. A number of themes were explored on the day including:

- Being an Ally: Moving into action
- Defining Black in Unison
- ENFYS – Cardiff University LGBTQ+ staff network.

White Ribbon

White Ribbon Day 2021 was marked in Rhondda Cynon Taf with a Candlelit Vigil held in Pontypridd town centre to remember every woman and girl who have lost their lives as a result of male violence.

The vigil, which took place outside the Council's Llys Cadwyn buildings in Taff Street, was organised in partnership with the local authority, emergency services, Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board and third sector domestic abuse support organisations and trade unions.

We also held a number of virtual sessions with staff to highlight awareness of the 'Signal for Help'. The Signal for Help had been prominent on social media and it was important to raise awareness to ensure our staff knew how to support appropriately if a Signal for Help was observed.

Overall Progress

The Council continues to make significant progress in many of the equality objectives. As a consequence of the pandemic, much positive and innovative work has been done to improve the accessibility and inclusion of the services we provide across the borough.

Our work to deliver equality objectives contained in our Strategic Equality Plan helps us to demonstrate how we are contributing to [a more equal Wales](#) - 'a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances'. It also seeks to support all the well-being goals including a Wales of Cohesive Communities and a Prosperous Wales.

7. Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's)

The Council has had an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process in place for a number of years which is carried out under the following circumstances:

- Where new policies or practices are developed (including corporate plans, annual business plans and the annual budget);

- Where changes to existing policies or practices are proposed, and when conducting expenditure reviews and programme evaluations;

- Where there are proposals to withdraw from or discontinue an existing policy or practice;

- Where the Business Planning process has identified relevance to or implications for equality.

The process is regularly reviewed and takes into account the protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010.

The 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 if 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 2021-2022.

Equality Impact Assessments

Policy/Procedure	Date
21st Century Schools Programme - Proposals to improve education provision for Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llyn-y-Forwyn	June 2021
21st Century Schools Programme - Proposals to reorganise primary schools, secondary schools and sixth form provision in the greater Pontypridd area	June 2021
Welsh in Education Strategic Plan	July 2021
21st Century Schools and Colleges programme – Mutual Investment Model (MIM) - update	July 2021
Proposals to establish primary education provision for the Llanilid housing development	July 2021
Unadopted roads	September 2021
Rhondda Cynon Taf Tourism Strategy	September 2021
Update report on electric vehicle charging strategy & implementation plan	November 2021
21st century schools programme – Proposals to improve English medium primary education provision for Glyncoch, Tonysguboriau and Maesybryn	December 2021
Consultation outcomes on the Education and Inclusion Service's draft strategic plan 2021-2024	December 2021
Review of learning support class provision for pupils with significant additional learning needs	December 2021
Regional employability framework	December 2021
Guidance for unpaid carers in the workplace	January 2022
Council fees and charges policy 2022-2023	February 2022
The Council's 2022-2023 revenue budget	February 2022
Consultation on the proposal to enhance Welsh medium learning support class provision for pupils with significant additional learning needs	March 2022
Library strategy and action plan 2022-2025	March 2022
Digital strategy 2022-2026	March 2022

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

https://rctcbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1&LLL=0

8. Employment Monitoring Data

The Council must collect and publish on an annual basis the number of:

- people employed by the authority on 31 March each year by protected characteristic;

- men and women employed, broken down by:
  - job;
  - grade (where grading system in place);
  - pay;
  - contract type (including permanent and fixed term contracts);
  - working pattern (including full-time, part-time and other flexible working patterns).

- people who have applied for jobs with the authority over the last year;

- employees who have applied to change position within the authority; identifying how many were successful in their application and how many were not;

- employees who have applied for training and how many succeeded in their application;

- employees who completed training;

- employees involved in grievance procedures either as a complainant or as a person against whom a complaint was made;

- employees subject to disciplinary procedures;

- employees who have left an authority's employment.

All of the information above must be presented for each of the separate protected groups. The exception to this requirement is the data on job, grade, pay, contract type and working pattern, which must be broken down only in relation to women and men.

This information is attached at Appendix 1 - Employment Monitoring Data.

9. Procurement

The Council operates the SPD (Single Procurement Document) which is part of the [National Procurement Website](#).

The SPD is a standard form, which replaces pre-qualification questionnaires, and should make the process of bidding for a public contract easier and contains a set of core questions commonly asked at the selection stage.
The SPD delivers a number of benefits:

- Increased efficiency for both suppliers and buyers, by allowing standard questions and keeping the number of questions to a minimum, and also by encouraging buyers to only seek information from suppliers if they can be clear about exactly how the information will be used;

- Greater standardisation of the selection stage, whilst also allowing for tailoring of questions to meet the specific requirements of the procurement;

- Increased transparency of the selection process and how responses will be evaluated – so that suppliers are able to work out easily whether or not they wish to bid for a particular opportunity, how to optimise their proposal and how to present it in an effective way;

- Improved opportunities for small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) and local businesses to compete on a more equal footing as a result of a carefully considered question set that removes some of the barriers to entry for them.

It includes a section on equal opportunities and is in line with the guidance on procurement published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission at http:www.equalityhumanrights.com/wales/

10. Accessible Information

The Council produces information in a wide variety of formats according to need. Service areas record requests for alternative formats from service users to ensure that these are provided.

Accessibility Guidelines are available to employees on the Council's Intranet, these provide information on the types of accessible information available, what it is and does and includes a list of suppliers so that employees can source requested formats.

The Council has adopted the RNIB Clear Print Guidelines to increase readability of its documents.

11. Future Work

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 continue to respond to emerging issues as a result of the Covid pandemic and review the recommendations in Welsh Government's draft Race Equality Action Plan.

12. Contact Details

Rhondda Cynon Taf welcomes comments on all aspects of this report, both in what it contains and what it may not make clear enough about the work and progress in delivering equality and removing discrimination.

If you have any comments or want to know more about the work the Council is doing please contact:

Melanie Warburton
Diversity and Inclusion Manager
Rhondda Cynon Taf Council
Ty Elai
Dinas Isaf East Industrial Estate
Williamstown
Tonypandy
CF40 1NY

Telephone: 01443 444531

email: equality@rctcbc.gov.uk

Employment Monitoring Data

Equality monitoring information is stored against all employees' records in the Council's payroll and human resources information system (Vision). The information is requested at the recruitment stage and entered on to their record at that point.

The Council encourages all employees to provide this information and an equality monitoring survey is carried out on all employees every two years in an attempt to increase the information held.

In preparation for the extended employee monitoring requirements being introduced as part of the Equality Act 2010, the Council carried out an equality monitoring survey of all employees in 2011. This survey included questions that covered all protected characteristics except pregnancy. This question was not asked as it was felt that information on pregnancy and maternity would already be held on employee records and the time period allowed for return could mean that the information provided would be out of date.

The Diversity and Inclusion Team worked with other service areas to identify other useful information which resulted in the questionnaire including sections on the use of British Sign Language, Welsh language ability and whether or not an employee had caring responsibilities. This information was provided statistically to the service areas to inform their work and strategies.

Statistical analysis of the information is contained in the following tables and covers all Council employees including teachers and school based employees.

People Employed by Protected Characteristic

The following information has been provided using employees' national insurance numbers; this ensures that where an employee may work in more than one job their details will be included only once to avoid duplication of information. It includes teachers and school based employees. Some comparisons will be made to the local demographic of the borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf as over 80% of employees live in the Council area.

EQUALITY MONITORING DATA FOR THE YEAR 2021-2022

Gender

The table below shows the gender breakdown of employees:

Gender	Total	% of Workforce
Male	2825	25.9%
Female	8099	74.1%
Total	**10924**	**100%**

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	818	7.5%
25-34	2019	18.5%
35-44	2618	23.9%
45-54	2989	27.4%
55-64	2165	19.8%
65+	315	2.9%
Total	**10924**	**100%**

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	255	2.3%
Non Disabled	9007	82.5%
Prefer not to say	15	0.1%
Information not held	1647	15.1%
Total	**10924**	**100%**

Information is held on almost 85% 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 identify as having a disability.

National Identity and Ethnicity

The table below shows the breakdown of employees by ethnicity:

Ethnicity	Number
Asian	6
Asian Bangladeshi	1
Asian British	9
Asian Chinese	4
Asian Cornish	1
Asian Indian	3
Asian Other	5
Asian Pakistani	2
Black	2
Black African	12
Black British	2
Black Other	2
Chinese	4
Gypsy/Romany/ Irish Traveller	1
Mixed Other	11
Mixed White & African	3
Mixed White & Asian	9
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	11
Not Known	42
Other Ethnic Group	28
Prefer Not To Say	20
White	3845
White - British	2780
White - Cornish	1
White - English	60
White - Irish	9
White - Northern Irish	1
White - Other	17
White - Scottish	7
White - Welsh	2293
Not Known	1733
Total	**10924**

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

National Identity	Number of Employees
African	1
American	1
Any other Asian background	2
Any other Mixed background	2
Any other White background	6
Australian	2
Bangladeshi	1
British	1699
British Virgin Islands	1
Burundi	1
Canadian	1
Chinese	7
Croatian	1
Dutch	1
English	191
European	11
German	1
Greek	2
Indian	4
Irish	16
Nigeria	2
Northern Ireland	1
Norwegian	1
Other	2
Polish	8
Portuguese	2
Romanian	2
Scottish	20
Spanish	2
Sri Lankan	2
Thai	1
Ukrainian	1
Welsh	4715
White and Asian	3
Not Known	4211
Total	**10924**

Information is held on 61% 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	2762
Muslim	16
Hindu	7
Buddhist	14
Sikh	1
Catholic	1
Other	95
% of workforce identifying with a religion	**26.5%**
None	3546
Prefer not to say	426
Information not held	4056
Total	**10924**

Information is held on 63% of employees.

Sexual Orientation

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

Sexual Orientation	Total
Heterosexual	4434
Gay Man	58
Gay Woman/Lesbian	49
Bisexual	45
% of workforce identifying a sexual orientation	**42.0%**
Prefer not to say	276
Information not held	6062
Total	**10924**

Information is held on 45% of employees. This is the higher than reported last year (38%). 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 2022 there were 146 employees on maternity leave. During the year 2021-2022, 284 employees had been on maternity leave during this period of time.

Gender Reassignment

Specific information has not been published due to the possibility of identification. The Council has a Gender Reassignment Policy in place which was developed some years ago as a result of an employee asking for support. Since that time the policy has been accessed and support provided as and when required by employees.

Regulation Nine - Gender Specific Information

Regulation Nine of the Specific Equality Duties in Wales requires the following specific information to be provided in respect of gender breakdown.

The number of employees employed at 31 March 2022 broken down by:

- Job

- Grade

- Pay

- Contract type

- Working pattern.

This information has been provided on the basis of actual job numbers so that those employees who work in more than one job are included in all the jobs they are employed in so the numbers may be different to those in the previous section. Once again the information includes teachers and school based employees.

The following table/s provides the specific information required:

Breakdown of Employees by Gender and Job

There are over a thousand job titles within the Council so for ease of demonstration they have been broken down into job families within the competency framework.

Job Family	Female	Male	Grand Total
Administrator	951	259	1210
Ancillary	1230	476	1706
Assistant Headteacher	40	31	71
Community and Social Care	1261	243	1504
Deputy Headteacher	80	40	120
Frontline and Customer Care	450	317	767
Headteacher	98	47	145
Middle Manager	187	94	281
School Support	1649	97	1746
Skilled Manual Worker	46	112	158
Strategic Manager	35	42	77
Supervisor	121	192	313
Teacher	1344	405	1749
Technical, Specialist & Professional	563	453	1016
Unqualified Teacher	44	17	61
Total	**8099**	**2825**	**10924**

As last year, the data provides very few surprises with the majority of women working in 'traditional' female areas, particularly in the Community & Social Care, Ancillary and School Support settings; this will be more closely examined as part of the Gender Pay Objective within the Strategic Equality Plan.

Breakdown of Employees by Gender & Grade

The Council operated the following grading systems as at 31 March 2022.

- Chief Officers (Head of Service and above)

- National Joint Council for Local Government Services

- Soulbury (including Heads of Service)

- Teachers/Education

The tables below set out the breakdown of employees by gender and grade:

Employees by Gender & Grade – Chief Officers

Grade	Female	Male	Total
Chief Executive	0	1	1
Deputy Chief Executive & Group Director	0	1	1
Director Level 1	1	4	5
Director Level 2	2	3	5
Service Director Level 1	1	2	3
Service Director Level 2	3	8	11
Head of Service – Soulbury	4	1	5
Head of Service Level 1	11	7	18
Head of Service Level 2	5	8	13
Total	**27**	**35**	**62**

There has been no significant change since the previous year, whereby the majority of Chief Officer posts are held by males. Those held by females are largely on the lower end of the Chief Officer grades**.**

Employees by Gender and Grade – National Joint Council

Grade	Female	Male	Total
GR1	208	62	270
GR2	799	96	895
GR3	456	131	587
GR4	676	212	888
GR5	834	413	1247
GR6	1126	257	1383
GR7	805	289	1094
GR8	326	147	473
GR9	272	143	415
GR10	256	175	431
GR11	188	104	292
GR12	177	70	247
GR13	139	71	210
GR14	57	15	72
GR15	36	37	73
GR16	2	0	2
GR17	16	2	18
GR18	0	0	0
Total	**6373**	**2224**	**8597**

Employees by Gender and Grade – Teachers/Education

Grade	Female	Male	Total
Education Psychologists and Advisers	104	34	138
Leadership Group/Headteachers	81	38	119
Deputy & Assistant Headteachers	143	82	225
Teachers	1371	412	1783
Total	**1699**	**566**	**2265**

The figures above indicate that females make up 75% of the education profession.

Individual salary grades of Education is complex to summarise but on analysis there is a fairly even split of male/female across all salary points with no obvious discrepancies in respect of ability to move through the grades. The grades and salary points are based on nationally agreed pay scales and there are specific requirements for each grade and how employees move through them.

Employees by Contract Type / Working Pattern

Contract Type	Female	Male	Total
Permanent Full Time	2602	1870	4472
Permanent Full Time Term Time	146	21	167
Permanent Part Time	1364	180	1544
Permanent Part Time Term Time	2002	86	2088
Temporary Full Time	437	214	651
Temporary Full Time Term Time	12	1	13
Temporary Part Time	108	44	152
Temporary Part Time Term Time	552	52	604
Casual	876	357	1233
Grand Total	**8099**	**2825**	**10924**

For permanent members of staff the breakdown of female/male is comparable to the overall workforce. Although 74.1% of the overall workforce is female, a much higher percentage of those females compared to males are working on part-time or term-time only basis.

Applicants for Employment and Promotion

There were a total of 325 vacancies advertised during the year 2021-2022. The following table indicates the results of the recruitment monitoring for the same period.

Applicants for Employment and Promotion by Protected Characteristic

	Applicants	Shortlisted	Appointed
Disabled	441	199	35
Female	3232	1971	633
LGB	491	142	48
Male	1345	909	292
Minority Ethnic	399	102	34
Non Binary	11	4	2
Transgender	11	4	0
Prefer not to say	20	8	2

Leaving Employment

Information shows that a total of 1131 employees left the employment of the Council in 2021-2022, which included 5 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 2021-2022.

Reasons for Leaving by Gender

Reason for Leaving	Female	Male	Total
Age Retirement	66	28	94
Death in Service	6	5	11
Dismissed	2	2	4
Early Retirement (Teachers)	2	0	2
End of Contract	105	49	154
Failed Probationary Period	5	2	7
Ill Health	25	3	28
Inability to Attend Work	0	1	1
Mutual Agreement	91	31	122
Redundant	5	0	5
Transfer to another Council	34	14	48
Voluntary	450	171	621
Voluntary early retirement and redundancy	21	2	23
Voluntary redundancy	8	3	11
Total	**820**	**311**	**1131**

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	36	58	94
Death in Service	0	0	3	3	3	2	11
Dismissed	1	0	0	2	1	0	4
Early retirement (Teachers)	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
End of Contract	33	50	29	21	20	1	154
Failed probationary period	4	3	0	0	0	0	7
Ill health	0	0	0	6	19	3	28
Inability to Attend Work	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Mutual agreement	1	6	8	25	59	23	122
Redundant	0	1	1	0	3	0	5
Transfer to another Council	2	23	13	10	0	0	48
Voluntary	67	189	167	122	68	8	621
VER and redundancy	0	0	0	0	18	5	23
Voluntary redundancy	1	2	2	3	2	1	11
Total	**109**	**274**	**223**	**192**	**232**	**101**	**1131**

Reason for Leaving by Disability

Reason for Leaving	Total
Age Retirement	1
End of Contract	10
Failed probationary period	1
Mutual agreement	8
Voluntary	17
Voluntary early retirement + redundancy	1
Voluntary redundancy	1
Total	**39**

Reason for Leaving by Ethnicity

Reason	White	Ethnic Minority	Not Known	Total
Age retirement	78	1	15	94
Death in service	10	1	0	11
Dismissed	4	0	0	4
Early retirement (Teachers)	1	0	1	2
End of contract	117	4	33	154
Failed probationary period	3	1	3	7
Ill health	24	0	4	28
Inability to Attend Work	0	0	1	1
Mutual agreement	98	0	24	122
Redundant	4	0	1	5
Transfer to another Council	34	0	14	48
Voluntary	464	10	147	621
VER with redundancy	22	0	1	23
Voluntary redundancy	8	0	3	11
Total	**867**	**17**	**247**	**1131**

Reason for Leaving by Religion or Belief

Reason	Christian	Hindu	Muslim	No Religion	Other	Prefer not to say	Sikh	Not Known	Total
Age Retirement	32	0	0	10	2	2	0	48	94
Death in Service	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	9	11
Dismissed	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	4
Early retirement (teachers)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
End of contract	43	1	2	65	0	15	0	28	154
Failed probationary period	0	0	1	3	0	3	0	0	7
Ill health	7	0	0	3	3	1	0	14	28
Inability to Attend Work	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Mutual agreement	29	0	0	14	0	3	0	76	122
Redundant	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	5
Transfer to another Council	12	0	0	11	0	0	0	25	48
Voluntary	136	0	1	210	2	35	1	236	621
VER with redundancy	8	0	0	5	0	0	0	10	23
Voluntary redundancy	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	6	11
Total	**273**	**1**	**4**	**326**	**7**	**61**	**1**	**458**	**1131**

Reason for Leaving by Sexual Orientation

Reason	Hetero-sexual	Gay/ Lesbian	Bi-sexual	Prefer not to say	Not Known	Total
Age retirement	37	0	0	2	55	94
Death in service	0	0	0	1	10	11
Dismissed	1	0	0	1	2	4
Early retirement (Teachers)	1	0	0	0	1	2
End of contract	74	1	5	12	62	154
Failed probationary period	4	0	0	3	0	7
Ill health	9	0	0	1	18	28
Inability to Attend Work	0	0	0	0	1	1
Mutual agreement	31	0	0	4	87	122
Redundant	2	0	0	0	3	5
Transfer to another Council	15	1	0	1	31	48
Voluntary	208	6	6	25	376	621
VER with redundancy	11	0	0	0	12	23
Voluntary redundancy	2	0	0	0	9	11
Total	**395**	**8**	**11**	**50**	**667**	**1131**

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 2014-2015.

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 their 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 to the pandemic the delivery of formal training was reviewed, unfortunately it appears that equality monitoring was not undertaken in most cases due and also due to the change of system of recording, as a consequence information is only held for 27 employees for the period 2021-2022. This will be reviewed for next year with the introduction of the equality monitoring toolkit.

Disciplinary & Grievance

Disciplinary and Grievance cases are recorded and monitored through the Vision System. There were a total of 122 cases covering disciplinary, grievance and dignity at work and disciplinary action resulting from sickness absence in 2021-2022. The tables below provide equality monitoring information for these cases:

Gender

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Male	**78**	29	42	0	7
Female	**44**	20	17	0	7
Total	**122**	**49**	**59**	**0**	**14**

Age

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
16 – 24	**5**	4	1	0	0
25 – 34	**16**	12	4	0	0
35 – 44	**29**	13	13	0	3
45 – 54	**32**	8	20	0	4
55 – 64	**34**	8	19	0	7
65+	**6**	4	2	0	0
Total	**122**	**49**	**59**	**0**	**14**

Disability

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Disabled	**8**	3	3	0	2
Non Disabled	**98**	37	51	0	10
Information not held	**16**	9	5	0	2
Total	**122**	**49**	**59**	**0**	**14**

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	1	0	0	0	1
White	103	39	56	0	8
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Information not held	17	9	3	0	5
Total	122	49	59	0	14

Religion or Belief

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
No Religion	43	25	17	0	1
Christian	19	5	11	0	3
Other	3	1	1	0	1
Prefer not to say	1	0	1	0	0
Information not held	56	18	29	0	9
Total	122	49	59	0	14

Sexual Orientation

	Total	Discipline	Sickness Absence	Grievance	Dignity at Work
Heterosexual	32	17	15	0	0
Gay/Lesbian	1	0	0	0	1
Bisexual	1	0	0	0	1
Prefer not to say	1	0	1	0	0
Information not held	87	32	43	0	12
Total	122	49	59	0	14

Gender Reassignment & Pregnancy and Maternity

There was 1 employee in these categories involved in disciplinary, sickness absence or grievance cases.