



Consultation:
Strategic
Equality
Objectives

ABOUT OUR CONSULTATION

This consultation report is about the council's proposed "Strategic Equality Plan". Under the Equality Act (2010), local authorities in Wales must publish a Strategic Equality Plan that sets out objectives and priorities it wants to achieve over a four year period. These priorities are called "Equality Objectives".

This document introduces Newport City Council's Equality Objectives and describes the consultation process that we undertook to identify them.

OUR EQUALITY DUTIES

THE GENERAL DUTY

When making decisions and delivering services we must have due regard to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (protected characteristics are explained later in this report).
- Fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

When thinking about how to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't, we also need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and are connected to that characteristic.
- Meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low. We also have to particularly think about how it will tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

THE SPECIFIC DUTIES

The Equality Act provides a power to make regulations imposing duties on public bodies to support better performance of the general duty; these are known as the Specific Public Sector Equality Duties and are different in England, Scotland and Wales. The Specific Duties underpin the General Duty and have been developed around four main principles:

1. Use of evidence
2. Consultation and Involvement
3. Transparency
4. Leadership

WHO IS PROTECTED UNDER THE EQUALITY ACT 2010?

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of their protected characteristic. This is the term used in the Equality Act 2010 to identify the types of things that affect how people are treated and can mean people may experience discrimination.

The law is designed to protect them, they are:

- ▶ age
- ▶ disability
- ▶ gender reassignment
- ▶ religion or belief
- ▶ marriage and civil partnership
- ▶ sex
- ▶ sexual orientation
- ▶ race
- ▶ pregnancy and maternity

OUR EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

1. LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE & INVOLVEMENT

“Newport City Council has strong leadership and clear governance around equality, ensuring robust monitoring processes and regular meaningful stakeholder engagement”

This Equality Objective focuses on the role that Newport City Council can play in promoting equalities, how we can put the agenda at the heart of our decision making processes, and how we ensure that we are delivering against our commitments and involving local people in the decisions that affect them.

2. CUSTOMER SERVICE AND ACCESS

“Newport City Council’s services are accessible to everyone in Newport, providing services that are both inclusive and considerate of individual need”

This Equality Objective focuses on the degree to which the services delivered by the council are accessible to the public, it also focuses on how we consider the diverse needs of communities when designing new services or amending existing ones.

3. REPRESENTATIVE WORKFORCE

“Newport City Council has a workforce that represents the city and is a workplace with an inclusive culture which recruits, develops and retains staff”

This Equality Objective focuses on our staff, how we can be more representative of the communities we serve at every level throughout the organisation, and how we can support staff to achieve their potential.

4. COMMUNITY COHESION

“Newport City Council contributes to the City of Newport being a safe space for all, promoting positive relationships between different communities, supporting integration and effectively identifying emerging community tensions”

This Equality Objective focuses on building communities that have shared values, where diversity is welcomed and embraced, and where people feel connected to the place that they live

5. LEARN WELL

“Newport City Council supports the well-being and attainment of the city’s pupils, and actively looks to address any disparity in achievement of vulnerable learners”

This Equality Objective focuses on how we work with schools to support them in addressing areas of inequality that may exist between different groups of pupils.

6. INDEPENDENT LIVING

“Newport City Council contributes to the city being a great place to live, to grow older and live independently”

This Equality Objective focuses on how the authority can support people to live more independently, and how we can offer a greater variety housing-related support that is responsive to individual need.

OUR CONSULTATION

We engaged with the public in two ways, through a number of online public consultation exercises, and a series of focus groups targeted at specific groups that were likely to have an interest in the development of our Strategic Equality Plan.

Focus groups: We mapped a number of groups across protected characteristics to ensure there was good qualitative representation in the development of our strategy. Over the period of consultation we engaged with the following groups:

- Newport Access Group
- Newport People First
- Newport BAME Forum
- Newport Fairness Commission
- Newport Youth Council
- Newport City Council Strategic Equality Group

In addition to this, a number of organisations with specific interests in equality and diversity (such as Welsh Government's Equality partners) were also consulted with. These organisations were:

- Woman's Equality Network
- Chwarae Teg

Online consultation: This ran over a 5 week period and was promoted on social media, specifically the council's Facebook and Twitter pages. Through this consultation process, any member of the public could contribute views on the authority's equality objectives.

In total, 33 of people responded to our dedicated SEP online consultation.

Bus WiFi Consultations: We are able to ask a series of questions before giving access to members of the public to free Wi-Fi on Newport buses. The responses received on a number of themed surveys were used to identify meaningful key actions within the Strategic Equality Plan and further shape our equality objectives.

SEP Bus Wifi: In total 2765 people responded to our bus Wi-Fi survey on the strategic equality plan. This survey focused on how we demonstrate leadership on equality issues and how inclusive we seem as an employer. These responses helped to shape our equality objective on Leadership, Governance and Involvement and Representative Workforce in particular.

LGBTQ+ Bus Wifi Survey: In total 2036 people responded to our bus Wi-Fi survey on LGBTQ+ issues in Newport. Of these, 397 identified as LGBTQ+. These responses helped shape our fifth Equality Objective "Learn Well".

Migration Bus Wifi survey: In total 851 people responded to our survey on migration within Newport. This helped inform our Community Cohesion equality objective.

In total the council received 5652 responses to Bus Wifi surveys.

OUR EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

This section explains how we developed our draft Equality Objectives before they were taken to public consultation.

We started by looking at broad themes that have already been identified across the council's existing strategic documents, including our Well-Being and Corporate Plans. These plans already identify some key areas of work that we should be focussing on, based on existing research and an understanding of national and local need.

In addition, we also considered key external documents like the Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Is Wales Fairer?: The State of Human Rights and Equality' (2018) report, which provides a broad assessment of inequality in Wales. We also mapped our draft Equality Objectives against Welsh Government's strategic equality work, considering documents like their Nation of Sanctuary Plan, Hate Crime Framework for Action, and Action on Disability framework.

Key themes identified are presented within the Policy Matrix below:

	EHRC* Indicator	NCC Well Being Plan	NCC Corporate Plan	Welsh Government
Leadership, Governance and Involvement	X	X	X	X
Customer Services & Access	X		X	
Representative Workforce	X	X		X
Community Cohesion	X	X	X	X
Learn Well	X	X	X	X
Living Independently	X	X		X

*Equality and Human Rights Commission, Regulatory Body

LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE & INVOLVEMENT

“Newport City Council has strong leadership and clear governance around equality, ensuring robust monitoring processes and regular meaningful stakeholder engagement”

The role positive leadership, clear governance and active involvement plays in promoting the equalities agenda comes across strongly in a number of key policy documents. **Welsh Government’s** own draft Strategic Equality Plan highlights the not only its aim of making Wales (and the Welsh Public Sector) a world leader in the field of gender equality, but more widely the central role that equalities plays in its vision for Wales.

The EHRC Is Wales Fairer? Review highlights that the important role of strong leadership in embedding the principles of equality within an organisation whilst also acknowledging that “participation of communities in decision making is important to enable people to influence those decisions that affect them in different areas of life” (2019, p.101).

Newport’s Well-being Plan identifies engagement with local people as being key to the development and delivery of appropriate services and acknowledges the important role of gathering accurate customer intelligence in identifying different outcomes between different sections of the city’s population (2017, p.29).

This commitment to listening to the needs of the people of Newport is also echoed within our **Corporate Plan 2017-2022** which identifies key organisational design principles relevant to this draft Equality Objective, namely **Enabling and Capacity Building, Citizen Role**, and being **Evidence-based**. These principles ensure that services and decisions are shaped by the voices and experiences of citizens who are representative of our diverse city.

Our consultation feedback broadly suggested that we have scope to improve on how we promote and show leadership in the field of equality. Within our online survey, 78.1% of respondents stated that they agreed with this Equality Objective.

Specific concerns about a lack of leadership ranged from the council not being visible enough marking key dates in the equalities calendar, to a perceived lack of an online presence, particularly when countering hate speech online. There was also reference, particularly within our survey responses, to the idea that Newport City Council was not an employer that welcomed diversity, and too often simply paid “lip service” to the agenda.

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND ACCESS

“Newport City Council is accessible to our diverse communities, providing a service that is both inclusive and considerate of individual need”

Over 73,000 people visit the Civic Centre and Information Station annually, accessing a huge number of different services. Over the course of the lifespan of our Equality Strategy, we will increasingly look to move towards new ways of engaging with the public, including further digitalisation of services and the establishment of Neighbourhood Hubs across the city. It is essential that we consider the impact of these changes on all of our communities, and that we work towards a service that is accessible to everyone.

Our Corporate Plan 2017-2022 outlines a number of aspirations for improving customer services over the next few years, including improving online access to council services and embedding our Neighbourhood Hubs across the city.

The EHRC’s Is Wales Fairer Review: 2018 includes access to services as a key equality indicator, cutting across a number of themes including access to culture, leisure and sport. The report also details barriers that may be faced by particular communities in accessing services, including fear of discrimination and poor accessibility.

Work on this objective will focus on those communities that may be disproportionately impacted by these barriers.

Our consultation feedback painted a mixed picture in terms of how people felt about the responsiveness of frontline council services to specific needs. Some of our feedback suggested that services were good at responding to specific customer needs and that these services had also significantly improved over the past few years. However, it was clear that some groups had also experienced what they felt was a very poor customer service, and that council services often struggled to be responsive to people's needs. This experience was often linked to frontline staff not being able to access interpreter services (including BSL) and hearing loops. It was also raised that frontline staff should be provided with mandatory disability awareness training.

This Equality Objective was popular among survey respondents, with 81.3% of people stating that they agreed with the proposed draft objective.

REPRESENTATIVE WORKFORCE

“Newport City Council has a workforce that is representative of the demographic of the city and a workplace with an inclusive culture which recruits, develops and retains diverse staff”

Delivering a representative workforce is a continuation from our previous Strategic Equality Plan, and represents an ongoing piece of work that will continue to develop with the evolution of the city. Having a representative workforce is key to ensuring the public has trust in us, and that we have at our disposal the diversity of ideas, skills, and experience necessary to meet the needs of the city.

At present, 4.4% of our employees identify as being from a BAME (Black Asian Minority Ethnic) background, compared to census figures of around 10% for the city of Newport. Women are over-represented in the workforce at around 76%, however our [gender pay gap report](#) suggests that we have a gender pay gap of around 4.8%. In addition to this, only 1% of our employees identify as being disabled. We recognise that there is more to be done, in improving the quality of demographic data we collect about our staff, how we use this to inform our work and attracting, recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce.

The EHRC's 2018 Review highlights workforce diversity as an important theme, and states that improved levels of workforce diversity should be pursued more robustly (EHRC 2018, p.31). The review also makes clear that this move towards more diverse workforces should be more inclusive, identifying concerns that “disabled people are less likely than non-disabled people to work in managerial or professional occupations which tend to have high pay” (EHRC, Page 29), and that BAME young people are underrepresented in apprenticeship schemes. This is echoed by **Newport's Well-being Plan** which highlights the important role that representative workforces have to play in making the city and the council feel inclusive of different groups (NWBP 2019, 13).

Welsh Government's Equality and Inclusion programme also engages with the issue of representation in the workforce, with a number of organisations funded through Welsh Government's Equality and Inclusion Programme having launched initiatives aimed at increasing participation from underrepresented groups. Welsh Government's draft equality objective 8 also aspires to “the Welsh public sector leading the way as exemplar inclusive and diverse organisations and employers”.

Our consultation feedback was supportive of this proposed draft objective, with 66% of respondents to our dedicated SEP online survey stating that they agreed with the Equality Objective. There was frequent acknowledgement across all consultation formats that this objective linked closely with the need to provide stronger visible leadership in the field of equalities, as discussed in Equality Objective 1; Leadership, Governance and Involvement.

Statements from supporting consultation exercises, suggested that non-white British survey respondents were 8% less likely to believe that they could enjoy a successful career at Newport City Council. Within these survey response comments relating to a lack of opportunity for external candidates were also frequently raised.

Within our online survey, 65.6% of respondents stated that they agreed with this draft objective.

COMMUNITY COHESION

“Newport City Council contributes to the City of Newport being a safe space for all, promoting positive relationships between different communities, supporting integration and effectively identifying emerging community tensions”

Creating and supporting cohesive communities remains a priority for us, particularly as we continue to experience the effects of the decision to leave the European Union, and see threats to cohesion continue to grow, including levels of hate crime across Wales.

Newport has a rich history of migration and we continue to welcome newcomers to the city, however we are also aware of the importance of effective integration which places responsibilities both on new arrivals and receiving communities. We also need to support those EU nationals living in Newport to continue to do so post-Brexit, ensuring everyone living in Newport feels a sense of belonging and common sense of purpose.

The **EHRC Review** highlights the significance of Hate Crime across England and Wales, identifying Ethnicity and Religion as the motivations for most Hate Crimes, and an increasing trend in Hate Crimes motivated by sexual orientation, transgender identity and disability (2017, p.93-94). Hate crime in Newport continues to rise annually, although we know that this is still under reported by many communities, particularly LGBTQ+ and disabled people.

This theme also has strong links to **Newport’s Well-being Plan** and to the overarching Well-being Goals of “A Wales of cohesive communities” and “A more equal Wales”. This objective supports the authority’s key priority areas identified within the **Corporate Plan**, specifically those which commit to delivering “**Resilient Communities**” and a “**Thriving City**”.

This draft objective is also linked to **Welsh Government’s own strategic priorities**, specifically their draft Equality Objectives 5 and 6 which make clear commitments to improving community cohesion through the “elimination of identity-based abuse, harassment, hate crime and bullying” and the establishment of “A Wales of cohesive communities that are resilient, fair and equal”.

Our consultation feedback was supportive of this proposed draft objective, with 64.5% of respondents to our dedicated SEP online survey stating that they agreed with the Equality Objective.

LEARNING WELL

“Newport City Council supports the well-being and attainment of all our pupils, addressing any disparity in achievement of vulnerable learners”

This proposed Equality Objectives acknowledges the key role that education has to play in removing barriers and delivering opportunities to enable all our children and young people to reach their potential.

Our Education Services ‘Learn Well Plan 2019-2022’ sets out ambitions for all those working within Education Services in Newport to improve the well-being of pupils in our schools in ways that reflect the council’s well-being objectives. Our work under this objective will align closely with the Learn Well Plan, which has a particular focus on the educational outcomes of vulnerable learners.

The EHRC review supports a focus on vulnerable learners, highlighting the disparity in exclusion rates across different groups (2018, p.15). The report also identifies a number of issues relating to disparities in educational attainment.

Education services play a key role in delivering all of **Newport's Wellbeing Plan** objectives, but most relevant is our commitment to ensure that "people have skills and opportunities to find suitable work and contribute to sustainable economic growth". (NWBP Page 13). Our **Corporate Plan** also identifies that "integration, good education and employment opportunities will help maintain cohesive communities" (CP Page 42).

Our consultation feedback was supportive of this proposed draft objective, with 67.8% of respondents to our dedicated SEP online survey stating that they agreed with the Equality Objective.

Comments from this survey and others conducted as part of the consultation highlighted the importance of education generally, and a concern about the implication of diminishing school budgets. The responses also suggested that more need to be done to support potentially marginalised pupils in schools.

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

"Newport City Council contributes to the city being a great place to live, to grow older and live independently"

This Equality Objective focuses on how the authority can support people to live more independently, and how we can offer a greater variety of housing-related support that is responsive to individual need.

The EHRC review identifies this area as an area that the public sector in Wales should focus on, stating that "Everyone should have the freedom to enjoy an adequate standard of living, with independence and security, and to be cared for and supported when necessary" (2018, p.46). The review goes on to highlight a number of key challenges within this area such as limited adapted housing provision, poor equalities monitoring data and an increased prevalence of poverty, which impacts on young people and disabled people most acutely.

This Equality Objective also relates to one of the 5 "Cross-Cutting Interventions" that appear in Newport's **Well-being Plan**. The plan highlights the importance of establishing a clear 'Newport Offer' that puts forward a complete package (of what?) that includes accessible housing (2018, p.14). This Equality Objective also relates to a number of other Newport City Council policy documents, particularly the council's 2017 **Independent Living Strategy** which looks to give people in Newport more choice and control over their living situation.

This Equality Objective also links to a number of key themes within Welsh Government's Equality and Inclusion work stream. Within their strategy on "[The Right to Independent Living](#)", Welsh Government stress that the public sector in Wales should have the "Social Model of Disability" at the heart of their approach to designing public services, and that all people should have the same **freedom, dignity, choice and control** at home, work, in education and in the community (2019, p.6).

Our consultation feedback was supportive of this proposed draft objective, with 77.4% of respondents to our dedicated SEP online survey stating that they agreed with the Equality Objective.

Comments from the survey highlighted general concerns around the prevalence of homelessness in Newport, particularly within the city centre, and an increased need for older people to receive support to access financial support and benefits. However it was clear in our focus groups that respondents were keen to ensure that "Living independently" did not mean living in isolation, and that being an active member of the community was very important.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Question 1: Do you agree with the proposed draft Equality Objective 1 (Leadership, Governance and Involvement) that the authority has set out?

Yes No

If no, why? _____

Question 2: Do you agree with the proposed draft Equality Objective 2 (Customer Service and Access) that the authority has set out?

Yes No

If no, why? _____

Question 3: Do you agree with the proposed draft Equality Objective 3 (Representative Workforce) that the authority has set out?

Yes No

If no, why? _____

Question 4: Do you agree with the proposed draft Equality Objective 4 (Community Cohesion) that the authority has set out?

Yes No

If no, why? _____

Question 5: Do you agree with the proposed draft Equality Objective 5 (Learn Well) that the authority has set out?

Yes No

If no, why? _____

Question 6: Do you agree with the proposed draft Equality Objective 6 (Independent Living) that the authority has set out?

Yes No

If no, why? _____

Question 7: Do you think there are any areas of inequality that are not addressed by draft Equality Objectives and that are of particular importance to you?

Yes No

If yes, what? _____

Question 8: We would like to know your views on the effects that the proposed Strategic Equality Objectives would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English. What effects do you think there would be? How might we build momentum and increase any positive impact of these effects, or where you think there might be negative effects, what can we do to mitigate them?

Question 9: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

