

# A Fair and Equal Ceredigion 2024-28

## Ceredigion County Council Strategic Equality Plan



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# 1. Introduction

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This is our fourth Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) 2024-28. It describes how we will continue towards our aim to meet our commitment to equality and how we will meet our obligations set out in the Equality Act 2010.

During the summer of 2023 we gathered people's views on equality in our local area. We have also drawn on a rich evidence source from previous campaigns carried out by the council and Welsh Government. We drafted our Plan and put it out for public consultation during the winter of 2023.

Our conclusion is that our Equality Objectives are still fit for purpose but, due to the changing nature of society and the work we have undertaken up to now, we need to amend the actions we will take to achieve the objectives. Our Equality Objectives are:

1. To be an Exemplar Equal Opportunities Employer
2. To Foster Good Relations and Tackle Prejudice
3. To ensure Engagement and Participation
4. To ensure Dignity, Respect and Access to Services
5. To provide Fair and Inclusive Education

## 2. Background

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### 2.1 The General Equality Duty

The aim of the general equality duty is to ensure that we consider the needs of all individuals when carrying out our day-to-day work, in developing policy, in delivering services and in relation to the public and to our workforce. Public bodies must have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Equality Act protects people from discrimination, victimisation, and harassment if they share one or more of the following 'protected characteristics'.

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Some people share more than one of these characteristics. This is called 'intersectionality'. The impact of intersectionality may vary, and it is difficult to quantify. We need to be aware of this when we develop policy, promote equality and address discrimination, victimisation, and harassment.

## **2.2 Welsh Language Commitment**

The promotion and use of the Welsh Language is covered by the requirements of the Welsh Language Measure 2011 rather than the Equality Act, it. However, in Ceredigion we consider Welsh Language requirements alongside the protected characteristics of the Equality Act to encourage a co-operative approach to the needs of all communities in designing and delivering services.

The Welsh Language Measure 2011 requires us to ensure that Welsh Language services are built into the planning and delivery of services. We must offer Welsh Language services to Welsh speakers without them having to request it. This is called the 'active offer'.

## **2.3 Socio-economic Duty**

The Socio-economic duty came into force in Wales in 2021. It aims to improve decision making and help those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. Socio-economic disadvantage means having low savings or income compared to others in Wales, making it more difficult to access basic services and opportunities. This can lead to inequality of outcome, for instance lower levels of good health, lower paid work, poorer educational attainment and an increased risk of being a victim of crime.

We need to understand how the decisions that we make may increase or reduce opportunities for people who are at socio-economic disadvantage. We do this with our equality impact assessment which is a key element of our Integrated Impact Assessment Tool.

## 2.4 The Specific Public Sector Equality Duties (Wales)

In addition to meeting the general duty, public bodies like the council must meet the following specific duties:

- Setting Equality Objectives and publishing a Strategic Equality Plan.
- Engaging with people in relation to the protected characteristics.
- Collecting and publishing information relevant to compliance with the General Duty.
- Annual publishing of employment monitoring information.
- Ensuring that our workforce know and understand our duty under the Equality Act.
- Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments of relevant policies and practices
- Addressing unfair pay differences.
- Establishing relevant conditions to meet the general duty in procurement processes.
- Reviewing progress on the Strategic Equality Plan and our Equality Objectives.

## 3. Ceredigion profile

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### 3.1 Ceredigion citizens

Ceredigion has a population of 71,475. If we could shrink our population to a village of approximately 100 people, there would be:

- 51 females and 49 males.
- 14 children aged 15 years, or younger and 6 young people aged 16 to 19 years.
- 54 people aged between 20 and 64.
- 22 people aged between 65 and 84 and 3 people aged 85 or older.
- 12 university students (this is an estimate based on [Where do HE students study? | HESA](#))
- 1 person whose gender is now different to what it was when they were born. 8 people would prefer not to tell you their gender identity.
- 5 people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual or queer. 10 people would prefer not to tell you their sexual orientation.
- 4 people who are from a variety of non-White ethnic backgrounds.
- 46 people who are Christian, 2 people who have another religion, 43 people who have no religion. 8 people would prefer not to tell you about their beliefs or non-beliefs.



- 45 people who are able to speak Welsh. 7 of these would be 65 years or older.
- 22 people who are classed as disabled under the Equality Act. 9 of these people have a lot of difficulties with their day-to-day activities.
- 11 people who provide unpaid care to a member of their family or a friend.

Source: ONS [2021 Census Profile for areas in England and Wales - Nomis \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk)

When we consider this image of the people of Ceredigion living together, it's easy to appreciate the diversity of our population and the need for us to acknowledge and understand everyone's preferences and needs. It is important that marginalised and seldom heard groups of people are involved in decisions and are able to access services.

### **3.2 Ceredigion County Council**

Ceredigion County Council is responsible for ensuring that we carry out our work in accordance with the law, and that public money is properly accounted for, and used efficiently and effectively.

We are committed to improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of the people who live in, work in, study in and visit Ceredigion. This commitment is set out in our Corporate Strategy 2012-2027 which describes how the council will meet the challenges ahead and make the most of opportunities. Our Corporate Well-being Objectives for this period are:

1. Boosting the Economy, Supporting Businesses and Enabling Employment
2. Creating Caring and Healthy Communities
3. Providing the Best Start in Life and Enabling Learning at All Ages
4. Creating Sustainable, Green and Well-connected Communities

Local Councillors are elected by the community to decide how the council should carry out its activities. They represent the public interest as well as the interests of individuals living within the ward in which they have been elected. There are 38 Councillors that represent the 34 electoral wards in Ceredigion.

The council is responsible for a wide range of services, such as refuse collection, street cleaning, planning, education, social care, road maintenance, public health, protecting vulnerable children, individuals and families, housing, leisure, museums and libraries. The council employs 2,037 people to deliver our services.

All our services need to work together to make sure that we achieve our equality objectives. Our Equalities Workgroup helps us to do this. The workgroup includes a representative from a range of relevant services and meets regularly to monitor the progress of our work on equality and to share good practice across services.

Below are our Equality Objectives for 2024-28 and the actions that we will take to address inequality, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not in Ceredigion. A number of actions are designed to support Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales action plan. these actions are marked with an asterisk\*.

## 4. Our Equality Objectives

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### 4.1 To be an Exemplar Equal Opportunities Employer

As the largest employer in the county the Council recognises and welcomes its responsibility of promoting equality and valuing diversity across our workforce and recruitment practices.

We support Welsh Government's ambitions to employ a workforce that represents our population, and that employment inequalities for black, Asian and minority ethnic people are reduced.

The top four groups that respondents to our regional survey rated as having a worse, or much worse experience of work than the population as a whole were disabled people, people from an ethnic minority, older people (aged 65+) and people who are pregnant or have recently given birth.

We are confident that men and women are paid equally for doing equivalent jobs across the Council. However, currently there are fewer women in senior roles than men and a higher proportion of women relative to men in lower scales.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's monitor report, 'Is Wales Fairer?' (November 2023) notes that the gender pay gap persists, that disabled adults are less likely to be employed than non-disabled adults – although employment gaps are improving, earnings gaps are worsening. Also that ethnic minority workers are more likely to be in insecure employment and to work in a low paid occupation. Trans people are afraid of facing discrimination in the workplace.

It is well-known and an often-discussed issue that many young people leave the county to pursue opportunities elsewhere in Wales or further afield across the UK. We anticipate that our graduate scheme and apprenticeship schemes will help to address this.

We must make sure that our workforce, particularly staff that deal directly with the public and key decision makers, understand the diverse needs of all our citizens and are sufficiently informed to be able to respond to these needs.

“Work opportunities for disabled people is tokenistic and public bodies do not do enough to promote and recruit disabled people in employment beyond lower paid positions. In public services, there are additional barriers, such as the requirement to speak Welsh which indirectly discriminates against deaf people since there are no Welsh accessible courses for deaf people in the whole of Wales.”

“For all public services to have more anti racist training, employ staff from diverse backgrounds, and know that black people can also be Welsh and belong”.

“People of colour not even given a chance.”

*(Regional Equality survey, 2023)*



## **Actions to achieve this Equality Objective**

**4.1.1 We will publish an annual gender pay gap report and take action to encourage a more even mix of men and women in lower grade and higher-grade jobs.**

### **How we will measure success:**

The percentage of people applying for jobs, and being appointed, reflects Ceredigion population demographic (Census 2021)

**4.1.2 \*We will publish an annual workforce equality report and take action to encourage proportionate representation in our workforce, particularly in the social care workforce and in senior management.**

### **How we will measure success:**

The percentage of people applying for jobs, and being appointed, reflects Ceredigion population demographic (Census 2021)

**4.1.3 We will review HR policies and recruitment literature so that they reflect the needs and the diverse identities of the community in which we live.**

### **How we will measure success:**

HR policies and recruitment literature are reviewed and updated where appropriate.

**4.1.4 \*We will continue to develop and deliver a range of cultural awareness and equalities training.**

### **How we will measure success:**

Increased number of staff, managers and elected members completing cultural awareness and equalities training.

**4.1.5 We will promote our graduate scheme and develop a coordinated approach to work experience and apprenticeship opportunities.**

### **How we will measure success:**

Number of work experience opportunities offered, number of apprentices recruited, and number of graduates recruited under the graduate scheme.

**4.1.6 We will build on our employee engagement activities and continue to ensure all our workforce's voices inform decision making.**

### **How we will measure success:**

Percentage of employees feel that the Council cares about their health and wellbeing.

## 4.2 To Foster Good Relations and Tackle Prejudice

Victim Support has seen a stark increase in demand for its hate crime support services. This rise was driven largely because of racial and homophobic related incidences.

The three main themes of the 'hopes and wishes' expressed at Aberystwyth Pride event in April 2023 were 'inclusion, acceptance and safety'.

The top four groups that respondents to our regional survey rated as having a worse, or much worse experience of getting on together in the community than the population as a whole were disabled people, people from an ethnic minority, people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual and transgender people.

We support Welsh Government's commitment to celebrate and improve the representation of LGBTQ+ people and black, Asian and minority ethnic people in the heritage and culture of Wales.

Ageism underpins many of the issues currently faced by older people, resulting in older people being treated unfairly, feeling socially excluded and their rights not being respected. Age-friendly communities challenge ageism by bringing people of different ages together and fostering positive images of ageing.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's monitor report, 'Is Wales Fairer?' (November 2023) notes a rise in racially and religiously aggravated offences. The report also notes that ethnic minority groups in Wales are more likely to report experiences of discrimination and bullying in the workplace. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people are more at risk of hate crimes due to their sexual orientation.

Our Integrated Impact Assessment tool enables decision makers to consider the impact of our decisions on people who share one or more of the characteristics that are protected by the Equality Act (2010). It also helps us to identify actions we can take to improve relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who don't.

"Racism and disability hate issues are rife. Sexism is rife and it's hard to feel safe".

*(Regional Equality survey, 2023)*

"Stop propagating transphobic jokes, criticism, discrimination, violence etc and come to see the normality of trans individuals."

*I wish...*"For people to not feel ashamed or scared to live as their authentic self."

*(Aberystwyth Pride, 2023)*

## **Actions to achieve this Equality Objective**

### **4.2.1 \*We will monitor the use of, and provide advice on, Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA)**

#### **How we will measure success:**

Number of IIA to the required standard submitted with Cabinet papers / the total number of IIA required = % success

### **4.2.2 \*We will implement our commitment to Victim Support's Hate Crime Charter and use the Hate Crime Charter Trustmark where appropriate.**

#### **How we will measure success:**

We are listed as an active partner on the Victim Support website and use the Hate Crime Trustmark on our website, recruitment campaigns and other appropriate places.

### **4.2.3 \*We will ensure that relevant collections, particularly those used as part of the delivery of the curriculum, celebrate diversity and encourage ant-racist engagement.**

#### **How we will measure success:**

Percentage of people that agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together (*National Survey of Wales/Annual Stakeholder Survey*)

### **4.2.4 We will support the Regional Community Cohesion team to monitor community tensions.**

#### **How we will measure success:**

Multi-agency tension monitoring meetings are held weekly, and concerns are addressed appropriately.

### **4.2.5 We will support the Regional Community Cohesion team to deliver an annual media campaign to promote awareness, celebrate diversity, and commemorate relevant historical events.**

#### **How we will measure success:**

Number of media campaigns promoted each year.

### **4.2.6 We will join the Age Friendly network and implement an action plan that reflects the needs of our ageing population.**

#### **How we will measure success:**

We are a member of the Age Friendly network and are achieving the outcomes of our action plan.

### 4.3 To ensure Engagement and Participation

We value the contribution that Ceredigion residents make to help us develop and evaluate our services. We want to make it easier for everybody in Ceredigion to have a voice, particularly people who are underrepresented.

We support Welsh Government's commitment to see more underrepresented people participating in democracy, including standing for elected positions. We also support the ambition of the Women's Equality Network to see an equal balance of men and women in politics.

People who answered our equality survey felt that the top three groups of people who have the worse experience of influencing decisions are people from ethnic minorities, disabled people and young people. They felt that men, older people, and Welsh speakers have the best experience of influencing decision, however it was pointed out that older people who don't use the internet are often left out as well.

We have more work to do inform stakeholders so that they have a better understanding of what the Council does and to enable them to be engaged in discussions about changing services. We need to do this in a variety of formats to make sure that everyone has opportunities to feedback and help shape services for the future.

"Things are increasingly online and there can be a digital divide which, arguably adversely affects older people".

"Consultation meetings, etc are nearly always inaccessible to deaf people. Thus, if you can't attend, you don't get to influence".

"Most decision-making systems are run by older people and participated in by older people, so it can be quite an exclusive environment".

"In my experience women are often ignored when they have an opinion".

*(Regional Equality survey, 2023)*

#### Actions to achieve this Equality Objective

**4.3.1 \*We will support programmes and plans to increase representation in local politics and decision making, particularly by young people, women, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people and people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.**

##### **How we will measure success:**

The percentage of young people, women, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people and people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds that take part in local politics and decision making reflects Ceredigion population demographic (Census 2021)

**4.3.2 We will develop the membership of Ceredigion Disability Forum so that we can better understand examples of good practice and the lived experience of people living with a disability.**

##### **How we will measure success:**

Attendance at Forum meetings increases year by year and members feel engaged in local decision making (2023 average attendance = 6 people).

**4.3.3 \*We will work with partners to establish a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic stakeholder forum so that we can better understand examples of good practice and the lived experience of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds.**

**How we will measure success:**

A Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic stakeholder group is established, and members feel engaged in local decision making.

**4.3.4 We will work with partners to establish a LGBTQ+ stakeholder forum so that we can better understand examples of good practice and the lived experience of people from the LGBTQ+ community.**

**How we will measure success:**

A LGBTQ+ stakeholder group is established, and members feel engaged in local decision making.

**4.3.5 We will develop and improve our use of online engagement platforms and our use of non-digital engagement methods.**

**How we will measure success:**

Our engagement toolkit is developed and promoted. The Engagement Annual Report reflects improved engagement methods and is approved by Cabinet.

**4.3.6 We will improve the way that we feedback to those who have participated in our engagement and consultation campaigns.**

**How we will measure success:**

Our engagement toolkit is developed and promoted. The Engagement Annual Report reflects improved feedback and is approved by Cabinet.

#### 4.4 To ensure Dignity, Respect and Access to Services

We support Welsh Government's commitment to ensure that our services are inclusive of the specific needs of LGBTQ+ people and people with different ethnic backgrounds, whether they speak Welsh, English or other languages.

Our Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (June 2022) recognised that childcare for disabled children in Ceredigion is very limited and that childcare settings where staff are well trained and have experience of working with disabled children are hard to find.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's monitor report, 'Is Wales Fairer?' (November 2023) notes that the education attainment gap between disabled and non-disabled people continues to widen in early years. Between 2020 and 2022 the number of families in temporary accommodation nearly doubled.

Our Play Sufficiency Assessment (June 2022) recognised the need for Welsh language play opportunities and for single gender activities for children who are aged 10 years+ and their religion/culture requires them not to mix.

Our Assessment of Local Well-being (March 2022) recognised that greater provision of housing for older people, housing with care and nursing care is required in order to meet the needs of older people's preferences to stay independent and live in their home.

The main topic of discussion at Ceredigion Disability Forum meetings during 2022-23 was traffic and parking arrangements in Ceredigion towns. People who answered our equality survey felt that disabled people have a far worse experience of accessing transport and accessing the coast and countryside than the rest of the population.

People who answered our equality survey felt that disabled people have a worse, or much worse experience of accessing services than the rest of the population. The 2<sup>nd</sup> most disadvantaged cohorts were people from an ethnic minority and older people.

We want to increase the use of Welsh in all aspects of public life in Ceredigion, where people can live, learn, belong and succeed through the medium of Welsh.

"No Childcare available for disabled children and teenagers either during term time or school holidays in Ceredigion".

*(Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, 2022)*

"Balance the need to keep the Welsh language alive with the needs of people who do not speak Welsh".

"Accessibility isn't always built into online systems, and this can pose challenges for various disabilities".

"I know people who don't have the internet at all, and I find they are quite excluded from a lot of information".

"As a white woman in a relationship with a black woman I have experienced harassment on public transport in the past and this makes me wary to use public transport now if I can avoid it."

"I would love to access the countryside but most of that isn't disabled friendly either".

*(Equality survey, 2023)*

## **Actions to achieve this Equality Objective**

**4.4.1 We will continue to actively promote our work Welsh development opportunities to meet service delivery needs and support our bilingual culture.**

### **How we will measure success:**

Number of employees who have improved their Welsh language skills (continuum)

**4.4.2 We will continue to offer inclusive and specialised play and physical activity opportunities for disabled children and young people.**

### **How we will measure success:**

Number of inclusive and specialised opportunities offered or funded by the Council and number of disabled children and young people who attended.

**4.4.3 We will continue to support registered childcare providers to meet the needs of children and young people who are disabled or have additional learning needs.**

### **How we will measure success:**

Number of children and young people that are disabled or have additional learning needs that receive support so that they can attend registered childcare.

**4.4.4 We will consider the needs of disabled people when maintaining or improving footways and carriageways (for example dropped kerbs and disabled parking).**

### **How we will measure success:**

All maintenance and improvements to footways and carriageways follow Department for Transport Inclusive Mobility guidance.

**4.4.5 We will work towards achieving a rating of AAA for our website.**

### **How we will measure success:**

Pdf documents are no longer used as the primary method of updating information on our website.

**4.4.6 We will continue to develop the methods we use to communicate with the public.**

### **How we will measure success:**

Our Engagement toolkit is updated, accessed regularly and training is delivered on its use.

**4.4.7 We will provide housing that meets the needs of our communities**

### **How we will measure success:**

Evidence of housing need and number of clients from specific groups rehoused in suitable accommodation.

**4.4.8 We will review our Toilet Strategy so that it reflects the needs of our changing population where reasonably and practicably possible.**

**How we will measure success:**

The revised Toilet Strategy reflects the needs of people with disabilities and people with various gender identities.

**4.4.9 We will work with partners to develop sustainable and affordable travel solutions.**

**How we will measure success:**

An action plan is developed and implemented that enables appropriate access to our services.

**4.4.10 We will ensure that the principles of the Welsh Language Standards underpin the way the Council deliver its services to the public, so that service users are able to access services naturally in the Welsh language, should they choose to do so.**

**How we will measure success:**

Our Welsh Language Compliance Report is deemed satisfactory by the Welsh Language Commissioner.



## 4.5 To provide Fair and Inclusive Education

We must make sure that children, young people, and adults in Ceredigion have fair and equal access to education. Everyone has the right to be free from discrimination, bullying and abuse in education settings, including in lifelong learning and further education.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's monitor report, 'Is Wales Fairer?' (November 2023) notes that the education attainment gap at foundation phase level between disabled and non-disabled children has widened. Lesbian, gay and bisexual students are at risk of experiencing a range of discriminatory behaviours in education. Digital exclusion remains persistent for older people and disabled people.

Our last Strategic Equality Plan included an action to implement Welsh Government's Anti-Bullying Guidance 2020. The guidance has been updated to reflect the ambitions of the Anti-racist Wales action plan. Schools should be aware of this and align their anti-bullying policies with the updated guidance.

We support Welsh Government's commitment to support LGBTQ+ young people and tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and to implement a whole school approach that is fully LGBTQ+ inclusive.

The top three groups that respondents to our regional survey rated as having a worse, or much worse experience of education than the population as a whole were disabled people, people from an ethnic minority and people who are pregnant or have recently given birth.

### Actions to achieve this Equality Objective

#### 4.5.1 We will adopt and implement Welsh Government's national trans guidance for schools.

##### How we will measure success:

Adoption of the national trans guidance is approved by Cabinet and implemented by schools in Ceredigion.

"make school a better place and stop bullies"

*Children and Young People Festival, 2023*

"Require schools to allow Pride clubs/other identity clubs. Not require them to have them, just to allow them".

*Aberystwyth Pride, 2023*

"Although it is a Welsh medium School, the children speak English with their friends – it's heart-breaking to take our children to a Welsh School and for them to speak English".

"With limited funding, seeking support for pupils with disability in education can be a challenge".

*Equality survey, 2023*

**4.5.2 \*We will work towards ensuring that School Governing bodies represent the range of diversity of the pupils within the education setting.**

**How we will measure success:**

Percentage of school governing bodies whose members reflect the diversity of the pupils within their settings.

**4.5.3 \*We will ensure that anti-bullying policies in schools and education settings reflect WG's updated version of the anti-bullying guidance, 'Rights, Respect, Equality.'**

**How we will measure success:**

Adoption of Welsh Government's update anti-bullying policy is approved by Cabinet and implemented by schools in Ceredigion.

**4.5.4 We will implement our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32**

**How we will measure success:**

Implementation of the plan is progressing as planned and monitoring reports are approved by Cabinet.

**4.5.5 We will improve educational provision and outcomes for children with additional learning needs (ALN) and reduce the attainment gap between children without ALN and those with ALN.**

**How we will measure success:**

All pupils with ALN make appropriate progress and this is evidenced by data on the achievement of ALN pupils at all key stages.

**4.5.6 We will continue to support older people and disabled people to take advantage of digital technologies, and to recognise the benefits of being online.**

**How we will measure success:**

Number of people over 50 and the number of people with a disability or additional learning need who enrol with Dysgu Bro for a digital literacy class/workshop.

## **5. Monitoring**

All our services need to work together to make sure that we achieve our equality objectives.

Our Equalities Working Group is responsible for the development, monitoring and review of this Strategic Equality Plan. The purpose of the Group is to consider how the Council can contribute to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in day-to-day activities.

The group meets three times a year and provides annual progress reports to the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee and to Cabinet.

Annual progress reports will be available to the public via the Council's website. Paper copies can be requested if needed.