

Strategic Equality Plan

Carmarthenshire County Council

2020-2024



Carmarthenshire County Council

Our commitment

This Strategic Equality Plan sets out the principles of our commitment to equality and diversity and outlines how we intend to fulfil our responsibilities as an employer, a service provider and as a community leader.

We are committed to treating our staff, and the people of Carmarthenshire, fairly. We will make sure that we do not discriminate against people because of their age, disability, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, belief or non-belief, social class, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, responsibility for dependents or for any other unfair reason.

We are committed to ensuring the delivery of excellent public services to everyone living, working, studying and visiting Carmarthenshire.

This Plan outlines how we will promote equality and diversity from 2020 until 2024, some of the practical steps we will be taking to put our commitments into practice and how we will monitor our performance and the effectiveness of this Strategic Plan.

How to contact us:

Comments and suggestions as to how the council can improve and best perform as an equal opportunities' organisation can be submitted at any time to the:

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Accessible formats

If you would like this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us. All publications are also available to download and order in a variety of formats from our website.

Understanding our duties

The Strategic Equality Plan has been developed so that we can set out how we aim to meet our commitment to equality and the legal obligations of the Equality Act 2010.

Within the Equality Act 2010, public bodies have an additional responsibility to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty, as outlined below:

Public Sector Equality Duty

The General Duty

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

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act
- Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- 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 do not, 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 the person 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 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 the Specific Duties for 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

The Welsh Government published regulations that introduced the Specific Duties for Wales in March 2011, which set out the actions Carmarthenshire County Council must take to comply:

- Setting Equality Objectives and publishing a Strategic Equality Plan
- Ensuring that we engage with people who have an interest in how the Council's decisions affect them
- Collecting and publishing information relevant to compliance with the General Duty
- Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments and publishing the results if there is a substantial impact identified
- Publish employment monitoring information annually
- Promote knowledge and understanding of the General Duty amongst our employees and use our staff appraisal procedures to identify and address the training needs of our employees
- Set a gender pay equality objective where a gender pay difference is identified
- Consider including conditions relevant to the General Duty in our procurement processes.

Who is protected under the Equality Act 2010?

Everyone is protected under the Equality Act; however, the General and Specific Public Sector Duties refer to Protected Characteristics. These are:

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

Welsh language

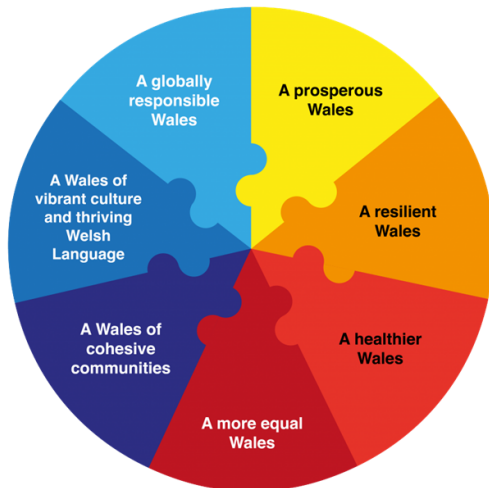
In Carmarthenshire, there is also a need to have regard to the Welsh Language. Although this falls under a separate legislative framework, namely the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011, there is a considerable tie-in between the council's wider approach to equalities and diversity and the commitment the council has towards the Welsh Language – and especially the need to ensure that people can use the language of their choice (Welsh or English) when dealing with the council. The requirements to Assess for Impact in relation to the characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010, applies equally to the Welsh Language.

Further information on the Welsh language Standards can be found on the council's website or through the Welsh language Commissioner.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations Act gives us the ambition, permission and legal obligation to improve our social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. Carmarthenshire County Council is committed to imbedding the Well-being of Future Generations Act into all its service delivery and activities.



The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Wellbeing Goals of 'a more equal Wales,' 'a Wales of cohesive communities' and 'a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language' are an integral part of our Strategic Equality Plan. As part of our work, we have considered the 'A More Equal Wales' and a 'Wales of Cohesive Communities' journey checkers, as published by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and will continue to consider our role as an Enabler whilst action planning.

Long term



The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.

Prevention



How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.

Integration



Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.

Collaboration



Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.

Involvement



The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

Developing and setting our Strategic Equality Objectives

To develop the equality objectives, we have engaged with our residents, engaged with our workforce and used relevant information. This information includes Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) research reports, Welsh Government reports and policies and Carmarthenshire County Council policies.

1. Equality and Human Rights Commission's '*Is Wales Fairer 2018?*'

In October 2018, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published '*Is Wales Fairer 2018?*', a comprehensive review of how Wales is performing on equality and human rights. The report provides valuable data and evidence that will support the efforts of all public bodies to reduce inequality across Wales. The evidence points to five significant findings:

- Steps in the right direction have taken place
- Socio-economic disadvantage exists
- Disabled people are falling further behind
- Challenges to women's safety and career progression exist
- Race inequality persists.

To see the report please click [here](#).

The challenges identified in the report have been set out taking a thematic approach, as follows:

- Education
- Work
- Living Standards
- Health
- Justice and Personal Security
- Participation.

2. Strategic Equality Plan Survey – Mid and West Wales Collaboration

Public services in Mid and West Wales joined together to ask the public their views on equalities. This included a survey and engagement events. The survey gathered views on how people from different backgrounds experience six major areas of life, based on the '*Is Wales Fairer 2018?*' domains, as listed above.

The partnership included Ceredigion County Council, Carmarthenshire County Council, Pembrokeshire County Council, Powys County Council, Dyfed Powys Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Hywel Dda University Health Board, Powys Teaching Health Board, Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Brecon Beacons National Park and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park.

3. Local and National policies and guidance

Corporate Strategy 2018-2023

The 2018-2023 strategy sets out the direction for the local authority over the next five years, incorporating our improvement and well-being objectives as defined by legislation. It also includes the Executive Board's key projects and programmes for the next five years, through the 'Moving Forward in Carmarthenshire' plan.

The strategy outlines the council's vision for the future in 15 well-being objectives under four key themes – to support residents to start well, live well and age well in a healthy, safe and prosperous environment.

A variety of services will be provided to meet these aims, each delivered in line with the council's Core Values, which underpin and guide the way that we work, the way we improve and the way we make decisions in our community.



Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2015

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act came into force on 6 April 2016 and provides the statutory framework to deliver the Welsh Government's commitment to transform social services in Wales to improve the well-being of people who need care and support and carers who need support.

The Act sets out a definition of well-being for people who need care and support and enacts the principle that everyone has the right to be heard as an individual to shape the decisions that affect them and to have day to day control of their lives.

Action on Disability: The Right to Independent Living

The Welsh Government's Framework for Action on Independent Living was first published in 2013 and set out actions to promote an inclusive and enabling society. During 2019, the framework has been revised and republished with a clear aim to support people with a wide range of impairments, including those who have physical or sensory impairments, learning difficulties or are mental health service users which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Carmarthenshire County Council's Equality Objectives

Taking the above evidence into account and weighing up with any other relevant information we have set the following equality objectives for 2020-24 for Carmarthenshire County Council:

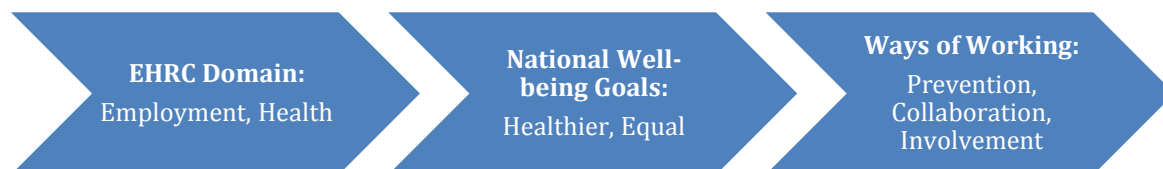
- 1. Being a leading employer**
- 2. The needs and rights of people with Protected Characteristics shape the design of services**
- 3. Safe and Cohesive communities that are resilient, fair and equal**
- 4. Improving access to our services and access to our environment.**

The above equality objectives are based on the needs and issues raised during engagement and consultation and '*Is Wales Fairer 2018?*'. We have also considered the Strategic Objectives as set by the Welsh Government and how we are able to contribute to those objectives.

We have not taken the approach of setting an objective for each characteristic but have set objectives based on the needs and issues that people with protected characteristics face. Where a specific protected characteristic is particularly disadvantaged we have recorded this in the background information for each objective. We have also included specific action in our action plan to address disproportionate or specific disadvantages faced by individual protected characteristics.

Objective 1: Being a leading employer

To be a leading employer, with key workplace policies and opportunities to influence. Ensuring that our Elected Members and staff take responsibility for equality and diversity and are aware of equality needs.



Feedback from the **Mid and West Wales Equality Survey 2019** shows that a person's protected characteristic is perceived to profoundly impact their experiences of work. The top four groups related in the survey as having worse experiences of work than the population were:

- Disabled people
- Older people
- Pregnant or recently given birth
- Transgender people.

Younger people, BME, LGB and Females were also identified as having generally a worse experience of employment in comparison to the population.

The key findings from '**Is Wales Fairer 2018?**' note that Disabled people's employment rate is less than half that of non-disabled people. Seven out of ten mothers have had a negative or discriminatory experience during pregnancy, maternity or when returning to work. The report also finds that apprenticeships remain strongly segregated with under-representation from ethnic minorities and disabled people.

As an initial step, we will take action to:

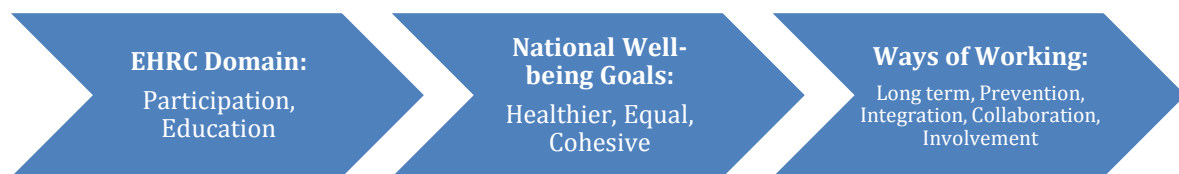
- Promote our commitment to the Disability Confident Employer scheme and act to improve how we recruit, retain and develop disabled people
- Continue to close and monitor pay differences and continue to publish an annual Workforce Pay Gap report
- Improve our workforce equality information and Welsh language skills data from current and new staff
- Mainstream Equality and Diversity in our Learning & Development opportunities
- Ensure that staff involved in recruitment and management receive effective training around unconscious bias
- Continue to support and promote our staff Well-being through various initiatives such as the 'Time to Change' pledge
- Review existing policies (e.g. adoption, maternity, paternity and parental leave) to ensure that they use gender neutral language throughout

- Promote and monitor our workplace policies, such as Flexible Working, Equality and Diversity and Behavioural Standards
- Promote and enact our membership with the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme
- Develop Transgender guidance to support our employees and managers in understanding the experience and process of transitioning and the potential barriers that may inhibit a trans person in reaching their potential in the workplace
- Promote key workplace messages based on the Carmarthenshire Equalities and Diversity Calendar
- Support the EHRC pledge 'Working Forward' which supports pregnant women and new parents
- Introduce a diversity mentoring scheme to enable staff from under-represented groups to reach their full potential.

We will continually review our action plan to ensure we make progress against this objective.

Objective 2: The needs and rights of people with Protected Characteristics shape the design of services

Fostering equality of opportunity and outcomes for all. By adopting an approach based on removing barriers which prevent people fulfilling their potential, we will create better policies and services for all.



Feedback from the **Mid and West Wales Equality Survey 2019** confirms that people's experiences of influencing decisions vary according to their demographic group. The three top groups are as follows:

- Younger people
- Disabled people
- Black and Minority Ethnic people

Only people who are male or people who can speak Welsh were perceived to have a better experience.

'**Is Wales Fairer 2018?**' confirms that Women remain to be under-represented among local election candidates and in public appointments. There is limited data on the representation of disabled people and people from ethnic minorities.

As an initial step, we will take action to:

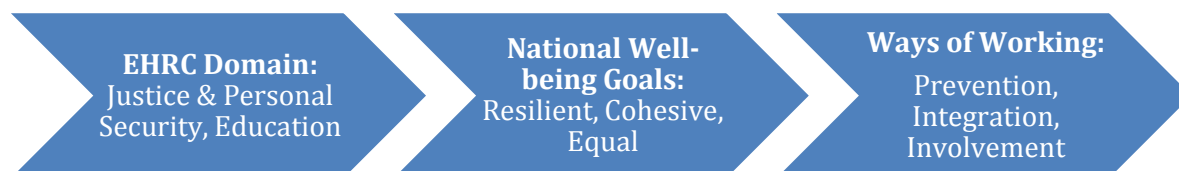
- Ensure that 'due regard' is given to all Protected Groups through our Integrated Assessment process and that support / challenge is provided on key managerial and policy-based decisions
- Ensure that our Elected Members have the best possible evidence and information, on which to base their decisions
- Consider the Socio-Economic Duty for Wales and its implementation across all departments (The socio-economic duty is a duty on public authorities to address the inequality that arises from socio-economic disadvantage, and to place this objective at the core of their policies and programmes)
- Strengthen our relationship with Protected Groups through forums such as Equality Carmarthenshire, the Carmarthenshire Disability Partnership and the 50+ Forum
- Enable the Carmarthenshire Disability Coalition to influence policy decisions and key developments, in partnership with other public sector bodies
- Encourage and support age-friendly communities
- Encourage and support Dementia friendly communities

- Review and develop our Engagement Policy to establish a range of engagement methods
- Support County Youth Council/Youth Forum structures to be as inclusive as possible and informed by and linked to their local democratic structures
- Identify and address any gaps in the groups / forums of young people engaged for consultation and engagement to ensure they are fully inclusive
- Create and implement a new Children and Young Peoples Participation & Children's Rights Strategy to ensure the Council delivers on its statutory and moral obligations for ensuring children and young people have their say on decisions that affect them
- Revisit and review the 2015 Children's Rights Promise that set out a clear commitment to children's rights
- Adopt the National Standards for Children and Young People's Participation and work with 5 services to complete National Standards Self- Assessments.

We will continually review our action plan to ensure we make progress against this objective.

Objective 3: Safe and Cohesive communities that are resilient, fair and equal

To foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not by building cohesive communities and tackling prejudice. Working in partnership to ensure that victims who experience abuse, harassment, hate crime or bullying have access to advice and support.



Getting on Together in a community

Feedback from the Mid and West Wales Equality Survey 2019 consider four demographic groups to have markedly worse experiences of **‘Getting on Together in a community’**, which are:

- Disabled people
- Transgender people
- Black and Minority Ethnic people
- Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people.

Welsh speakers were believed to have the best experiences of getting on well together in a community with the other protected characteristics perceived to have a broadly neutral experience within this domain.

The key findings from **‘Is Wales Fairer 2018?’** note that loneliness, isolation and a reduced sense of belonging are significant issues facing older people, disabled people, carers, new parents, BME people and Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual people.

Crime

Feedback from the **Mid and West Wales Equality Survey 2019** consider four demographic groups to have a significantly worse experience of crime in comparison to the population as a whole:

- Black and Minority Ethnic people
- Disabled people
- Transgender people
- Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people.

Overall, it was noted that all demographic groups are seen to have worse experiences of crime in comparison to the population as a whole.

‘Is Wales Fairer 2018?’ confirms that the number of recorded hate crimes has increased across all recorded protected characteristics in Wales, particularly for disability hate crimes. Of the 61 reported hate crimes in Carmarthenshire from April to July 2019, 49 were in relation to a persons Race, five in relation to Sexual Orientation, four in relation to Disability and three noted as ‘other’ reasons.

There has been a sharp increase in the number of sexual and domestic violence offences reported to, and recorded by, the police since 2015.

As an initial step, we will take action to:

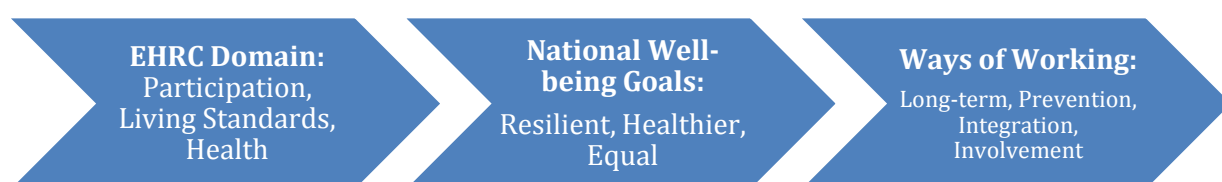
- Implement the Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan
- Continue to raise awareness of hate crime and to signpost potential victims to report and support services
- Monitor and respond to community tensions relating to the Brexit process
- Signpost EU citizens living in Carmarthenshire to the Home Office EU Settlement Scheme and provide the appropriate level of local authority support
- Implement the Carmarthenshire Equality and Diversity Calendar and review the focus on an annual basis. Examples will include Black History Month, Hate Crime Awareness Week, the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia and White Ribbon Day
- Implement and promote the ‘Every Learner Matters’ strategy, to promote equity, Well-being, Inclusion and Excellence in our learning communities
- Support Carmarthenshire Schools to develop and monitor their Strategic Equality Plans and Objectives
- Support Carmarthenshire Schools to monitor and address Identity Based Bullying.

We will continually review our action plan to ensure we make progress against this objective.

Objective 4: Improving access to our services and access to our environment

To ensure fair and equal access to services by ensuring that people with Protected Characteristics are treated with dignity and respect and meeting their needs where they are different to the needs of other people.

As part of this Objective, we will consider feedback in relation to the domains of Access to Care and Support, Housing, Access to Transport, Leisure and access to the Coast and Countryside and Access to information and digital services.



Worst experiences of...			
	1	2	3
Care and support	Disabled people	Older people	Younger people
Housing	Younger people	Disabled people	Single people
Access to Transport	Disabled people	Older people	Pregnant women / recently given birth
Leisure and access to Coast & Countryside	Disabled people	Older people	Pregnant women / recently given birth
Access to information and digital services	Older people	Disabled people	Black and Minority Ethnic people

‘Is Wales Fairer 2018?’ concludes that the lack of accessibility of the rail network in Wales, and a reduction in bus services in rural areas, creates barriers to social and economic participation for households without cars, for older people in rural areas, and for disabled people. The report also highlights that with increasing digitisation of services and communication, being older, a disabled person, having no qualifications, or living in social housing remain risk factors for digital exclusion, although personal internet use is improving among older people.

There continues to be areas of digital exclusion, particularly in rural areas of Wales. These connectivity issues have also been highlighted through the *‘Moving Rural Carmarthenshire Forward’* report, as approved in September 2019 by Carmarthenshire County Council.

Ensuring that digital services are accessible is required by the Equality Act 2010 in many situations because a failure to do so will amount to unlawful discrimination.

As an initial step, we will take action to:

- Work within the ethos of the Social Services and Well-being Act to ensure that people have received the right information and advice when needed
- Work with individuals and organisations from the sensory loss community to embed the All Wales Standards for Accessible Communication and information
- Revise the 'Getting your message across' guide to staff
- Identify a consistent approach to diversity monitoring of service users and citizens
- Work with key stakeholders to ensure inclusive design principles for all new premises and developments.

We will continually review our action plan to ensure we make progress against this objective.

Next Steps

During the first year of implementation, the Policy and Partnership Team will work closely with departments, stakeholders and our communities to prepare a detailed action plan. The actions will be monitored and updated through our Annual Report.

Appendix 1: About Carmarthenshire

According to the 2011 Census, the population of Carmarthenshire was 183,777 persons. This represents a numerical increase of 10,935 persons and a percentage increase of 6.3% since the last Census was undertaken in 2001. In comparison, the population of Wales increased by 5.5% over the 10-year period, while the total increase for England and Wales was slightly higher at 7.8%, confirming that Carmarthenshire's growth pattern is fairly consistent with the England and Wales average.

Carmarthenshire has a population density of 0.8 persons per hectare, which is lower than 17 of the 22 Unitary Authorities in Wales. The most densely populated settlements in Carmarthenshire are, in descending order, Tyshia, Lliedi, Bigyn and Pontamman. Carmarthenshire's International Labour Organisation (ILO) unemployment rate – which comprises individuals who are unemployed and actively seeking work – was 3.1% in the year ending June 2019, the lowest rate since 2006 and lower than the Wales average of 4.2%. However, over the trend period (June 2008 – June 2018), the number of persons in Carmarthenshire who may be classified as 'long term unemployed' (those in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance for a duration exceeding 6 months) has risen by 25.1%, (265 persons).

Population change in Carmarthenshire mirrors patterns of growth observed throughout Wales for all but one age group. This anomaly is present in the 0-15 age group, where an almost two percent decrease in children aged 0 to 15 years between 2001 and 2011 in Carmarthenshire contrasts with a 1.3% increase on a national scale over the same period. Excluding a minimal increase of 9.4% in the 0-4 age group in Carmarthenshire since the last Census, the county's young population, specifically those aged between 5 and 14 years, has experienced a 7.1% reduction. In contrast, Carmarthenshire's young adult population (18-24) has risen significantly. The 2011 Census records a 20.3% increase in this age category which, for the most part, may be accredited to the developments in the higher education sector (Coleg Sir Gâr & Trinity Saint David).

The most dramatic increase was observed amongst the older age groups, in particular those aged between 60 – 74 years and 85 years and over, where increases of 24.1% and 32.4% respectively were reported. Both increases were above the Wales average of 21.2% (60 – 74 years) and 27.7% (85 years and over) and reinforce the model of an ageing population, whereby a greater number of Carmarthenshire residents are concentrated in older age groups above pensionable age.

If we could shrink Carmarthenshire's population into a village of approximately 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, there would be:

(INFOGRAPHIC)

- 49 Males and 51 Females (2011 Census)
- 18 children aged under 16 (2011 Census)
- 61 people of working age (2011 Census)
- 21 people of pensionable age (2011 Census)
- 44 people able to speak Welsh (2011 Census)
- 98 people from a white background and 2 from a non-white background (2011 Census)
- 6 – 9 people would be Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (Stonewall Cymru)
- 14 people with a limiting long-term illness (2011 Census)
- 13 people would be providing unpaid care (2011 Census)
- 2 of the working age population with a disability (DWP Stats November 2018)
- 62 people who were Christian, 1 person would be of other religion and 29 would have no religion (8 would prefer not to state their religion) (2011 Census)
- 13 households would be earning less than £10,000 per year and 5 households would be earning over £80,000 per year (CACI Paycheck 2018)
- 18 people from the total population claiming key Department of Work and Pension benefits (DWP Stats November 2018)
- 18 lone parent households (2011 Census)

When we consider our County from such a compressed perspective, the need for acceptance, respect, understanding and knowledge of equality and diversity issues becomes apparent.