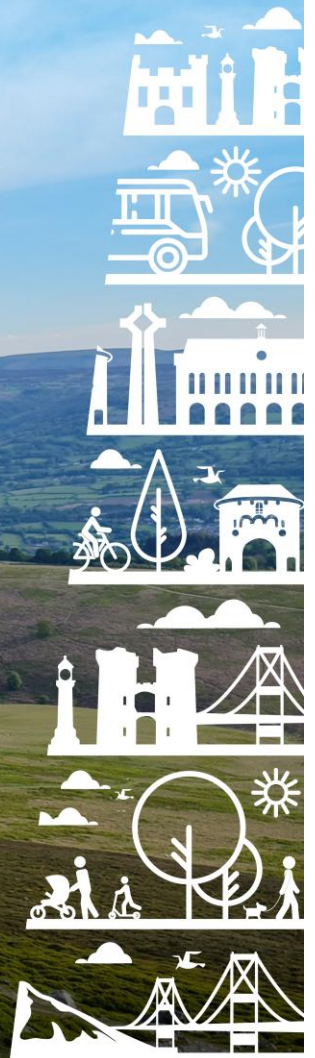


# Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2024 - 2025



monmouthshire  
sir fynwy



# Introduction and Policy Context

This annual monitoring report covers progress during the year ending March 2025. It reports progress on the Council's Strategic Equality Plan which was approved by Council on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024. You can access the latest Strategic Equality Plan on the Council's website at: <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/equality-and-diversity/>

## Links to strategies

This is not a standalone plan and has close links to a number of other key council, partnership and national strategies, plans and policies. Some of these are specifically focussed on equality and others have included equality as one of the key themes. Examples being:

- Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28
- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
- Cymraeg 2050 (1 million Welsh speakers by 2050)
- Strategaeth Mwy na geiriau/More than words strategy
- Monmouthshire Replacement Local Development Plan
- Strategy for Older People Wales
- Well-Being of Future Generations Act
- Social Care and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan
- LGBTQ+ Action Plan
- Action on Disability Plan
- Advancing Gender Equality Plan

The Equality Act 2010 not only requires the Council to comply with its general and specific duties highlighted below but also provides an opportunity for it to demonstrate its commitment to the principles of equality which have been a feature of its functions prior to the implementation of the Act.

# Legislative Context

## The General Duty of the Equality Act 2010

In exercising its functions, the Council must have due regard 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 relevant protected characteristic and those who do not;
3. foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;

The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

## The Specific Duties in Wales

The broad purpose of the specific duties is to help public bodies, such as this Council, in their performance of the general duty, and to aid transparency. In Wales the specific duties are set by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

The following are the specific duties:

- Setting equality objectives and publishing strategic equality plans
- Engagement
- Assessment of impact
- Equality information
- Employment information, pay differences and staff training
- Procurement
- Reporting and publishing

# Our Foundation: Purpose and Values

---

## Our Purpose

***Monmouthshire will be a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.***

This purpose is at the heart of everything we do to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Monmouthshire.

## Our Values

Values matter to us. They set out our expectations for ourselves, each other and the way we conduct business with organisations that we work with on your behalf. Our values are:

### **Teamwork**

Collaboration is at the heart of everything we do. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved. We will make the best of the ideas, and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

### **Openness**

We are open and honest. People have the chance to be involved and tell us what matters.

### **Flexibility**

We are flexible, enabling delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

### **Fairness**

We provide opportunities for all people and communities to thrive. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently, recognising that we will sometimes need to take positive action to overcome some of the challenges faced by people with different protected characteristics.

### **Kindness**

We will show kindness to all those we work with, putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions

# Monmouthshire's strategic equality objectives 2024-2028

The strategic objectives that have been agreed in the new Strategic Equality Plan are:

- **Objective 1:** Give every child the best start in life.
- **Objective 2:** Support the creation of fair employment and good work for everyone.
- 
- **Objective 3:** Work with partners and residents to build inclusive and cohesive communities.
- **Objective 4:** Expand our provision of community-based services that extend people's healthy life expectancy.
- **Objective 5:** Ensure our services are accessible to the public.
- **Objective 6:** Ensure we have a diverse workforce and a fully inclusive workplace.
- **Objective 7:** Reduce the gender pay gap.

This report provides an update on progress against these objectives.

## 1. Give every child the best start in life

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	x
Disability	x	Sex	x
Gender reassignment		Sexual orientation	x
Marriage or civil partnership		Welsh Language	x
Pregnancy or maternity		Poverty	x
Race	x		

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Work with partners across the Gwent Public Services Board, including Public Health and the NHS to embed actions to reduce health inequalities in early years services.	Children, young people and families are supported to improve their health and well-being.	Strategic Partnerships Manager	<p>The Gwent PSB has four areas of focus, one of which is 'Best Start in Life', which is focusing on tackling inequality at the earliest point, giving children and young people the best start in life.</p> <p>The Gwent PSB has committed to becoming a Marmot Region. A regional leadership group has been established, which includes director level input from MCC. This group is now leading the development of this area of focus, which is looking across Gwent and Monmouthshire, on how to tackle inequality. We are also collaborating with partners to improve the local data we use to understand and tackle health inequalities.</p> <p>The Monmouthshire Programme Board will be instrumental in developing and overseeing the local delivery actions that will support</p>



Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
			the aims of the leadership group and ensure this work filters down to our local community and improves the lives of children, young people and families in the county.
Increase the take up of free school meals focusing on those schools where the need is greatest.	No child goes hungry in school.	Chief Officer – Children and Young People	<p>We have rolled out of universal free school meals to primary schools. Healthy, free meals at school help all children to learn and thrive irrespective of their background or income. Uptake of meals remains varied across schools, on average 75% of pupils received the meals in the last year. We are working with schools, parents and learners to understand and remove any barriers to take-up.</p> <p>Cooking sessions have been developed and delivered to schools with low free school meal uptake to try to encourage families to take up the offer.</p>
Poverty proof our schools to reduce the cost of the school day, recognising that every pound matters to many families.	Children, young people and families are supported to improve their health and well-being.	Chief Officer – Children and Young People	<p>The Monmouth cluster of schools has created a draft anti-poverty policy. The other clusters are to follow. The majority of schools have now introduced uniform Swap Shops, and many have also introduced food pantries alongside the swap shop or in a community space to share surplus food with families and the local community.</p> <p>The work mentioned above, teaching cooking skills to increase uptake of free school meals, can be used at home to empower families to cook from fresh, which often costs less than buying ready-made meals.</p> <p>We have engaged Barclays Bank to deliver financial wellbeing sessions to young people in our schools.</p> <p>Welsh Government allocated just over £450K to Monmouthshire schools to make them more community focused. Four project ideas have been put forward for consideration. These included supporting families with the cost of living.</p>
Ensure that every	Children, young	Chief Officer –	All schools outline their support for Vulnerable Groups, defined as those

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Monmouthshire school identifies a senior leader responsible for tackling poverty and raising the achievement of vulnerable learners.	people and vulnerable learners are supported to achieve their full potential.	Children and Young People	who may be more likely to experience emotional, social and developmental barriers and hold data as part of their School Improvement Plan. These may include financial and social hardships within pupils' families including: pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and pupils from low-income families.
Develop a new Additional Learning Needs Strategy and related toolkits and resources, focusing on positive behavioural support.	Vulnerable learners are supported to achieve their full potential.	Head of Inclusion	<p>We have finalised a new Inclusion Strategy and Additional Learning Needs Policy. These have been considered by People Scrutiny Committee ahead of a decision.</p> <p>We have established processes to ensure Independent Development Plans are raised in a timely manner and are in place where required to support transition into school or Specialist Resource Bases.</p> <p>The majority of children with ALN or emerging needs have a school or nursery entry planning meeting to enhance transition and ensure schools have appropriate support in place for the start of the school term. Schools and parents have reported that this has resulted in a smoother transition and a more positive start to the child's school life.</p> <p>A wide range of ALN training has been offered to childcare practitioners to upskill them so they are able to meet children's individual needs.</p>
Continue taking a preventative approach to reducing school absences through developing Emotionally Based	Children, young people and families are supported to achieve their full potential.	Head of Inclusion	We have put in place arrangements to enable schools to access Professional Learning and online Q&A sessions to support the delivery of Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). This is to address the decline in school attendance since the pandemic. Our offer includes support from the Educational Psychology Service to develop high quality EBSA support plans. We are developing additional resources to support schools.



Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
School Avoidance and Trauma Informed approach in schools.			<p>A multi-tiered Trauma Informed Practice Skills and Strategies offer has been developed in collaboration with Traumatic Stress Wales. Trauma Skilled training is currently being piloted Monmouthshire schools, and the LEA. Guidance and tools have been developed to support the embedding of these approaches, and the work is overseen by a Steering Group.</p> <p>There has been a gradual increase in attendance in our primary schools. At the end of the academic year 2023/24 attendance was 93.6%; provisional data shows attendance was 94.1% in the summer term 2024/25. Attendance in secondary schools has been slower to increase. Attendance was 88.2% in the academic year 2023/24, provisional attendance was 90.1% by in summer term 2024/25. Attendance for those eligible for free school meals (eFSM) remains lower.</p>
Improve access to, and use of, data gathered by schools concerning bullying, harassment and discrimination, and provide support.	Better data to provide support for children and young people to feel safe in their school environment.	Head of Inclusion	<p>We have established a new template to improve recording of Rights, Respect and Equality/ Anti Bullying (RRE) issues, and obligatory reporting of protected characteristic incidents. This is in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Equality Act 2010 and Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan.</p> <p>We are using data proactively and preventively to identify and address concerns, including those raised by parents. Feedback has been given to schools where data returns identify issues and where schools have sent in returns with zero entries. Work is ongoing with secondary schools who are seeking to improve their systems</p> <p>We have delivered training on RRE anti bullying as part of the Vulnerable Learner Lead offer. The content will now be made available online to all school staff and officers.</p> <p>We used an external organisation - No Boundaries – to deliver a specific session on anti-racism in October 2024. A survey has been created to</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
			create an accurate baseline of school training so far and future needs. We are collaborating with another authority to enable peer-to-peer learning.
Provide an LGBTQ+ inclusive education through the Relationships and Sexuality Education section of the Curriculum for Wales.	Children, young people and vulnerable learners are inclusively supported.	Head of Inclusion	<p>We continue to offer professional learning, resources and termly Q&amp;A sessions on the Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum. This includes professional learning in identifying vulnerable learners, providing support and signposting to services.</p> <p>We ran the Diversity roadshow in two secondary schools for 380 Year 7 pupils during Pride month 2024. Throughout Monmouthshire 915 young people engaged, workshops and clubs. This was funded through the Welsh Government's Youth Support Grant.</p> <p>During 2024-2025 the Youth Service ran 32 LGBTQ+ lunchtime sessions in King Henry VIII school in Abergavenny, ten young people attended.</p> <p>Our staff also delivered a session at Usk College on Equality and Diversity/Gender and Sexuality. The evaluations from the session scored an average rating of 7/10.</p> <p>We also received referrals to our Shift project for young people who are LGBTQ+. This programme supports young people with mental health and emotional wellbeing needs and funded through the Welsh Government's Youth Support Grant.</p>
Work with others to increase childcare provision and quality in areas of higher deprivation with the aim of reducing	Children, young people and families are supported to improve their well-being.	Head of Achievement and Extended	<p>The overall number of childcare providers has reduced by three, however the number of childcare places has increased slightly, and some settings have extended their opening hours to meet the needs of parents / carers. We will continue to work with existing and potential childcare providers and attend careers fairs, to develop additional childcare provision.</p> <p>Between April 2024 and March 2025, there have been 67 training</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
inequalities.			opportunities offered to childcare practitioners across 25 different courses. These range from statutory courses such as Paediatric First Aid and Safeguarding to best practice courses such as Froebel, Early Communication, Team Teach, Positive Approaches to Behaviour and ALN modules.

## 2. Support the creation of fair employment and good work for everyone

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	x
Disability	x	Sex	x
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	x
Marriage or civil partnership	x	Welsh Language	x
Pregnancy or maternity	x	Poverty	x
Race	x		

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Encourage local firms to become accredited disability confident employers.	Disabled people have better access to employment.  More local firms with disability confidence status	Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	39 local firms are Disability Confident Committed (Level 1). Seven local firms are Disability Confident Employers (Level 2) as of 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025. This is a slight improvement from 23/24 figures which showed 39 local firms as Disability Confident Committed and two local firms as Disability Confident Employers.  We are working with the Department for Work and Pensions develop a joint event for local employers to raise awareness of the scheme.

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Ensure our tender documentation encourages and promotes diversity amongst our suppliers and contractors.	Diversity is supported within the workplace	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	<p>We are using tendering to promote diversity in the supply chain. We use criteria to identify if potential suppliers have been involved in Employment Tribunals; have ongoing investigations or charges, in relation to human rights/modern slavery. We also ask that they ensure all employees receive equalities training and that Welsh language requirements are adhered to.</p> <p>We also ask bidders to submit social value commitments that will form part of their contracts on various initiatives to tackle homelessness, inequalities and improve employability to disadvantaged and young people.</p> <p>There are also opportunities to include further information within specifications on each individual project.</p>
Deliver employability programmes and build partnerships with employers and local businesses.	Diversity is supported within the workplace and with partners	Head of Economy, Employment and Skills	<p>We continued to deliver support as part of the Business Monmouthshire project funded by Shared Prosperity Fund.</p> <p>In September 2024 we held two jobs fairs for attendees to meet local employers from sectors including: Care; Construction; Hospitality; Logistics and Retail</p> <p>We also made employment support and training opportunities available.</p>
Maintain a sustainable and accessible public bus network (including community transport) that serves our town centres.	Accessibility to town centres is maintained.	Head of Decarbonisation, Transport and Support Services	We adopted a new Local Transport Strategy in May 2024. We also used Welsh Government funding to increase the frequency of some public bus services to ensure a well-connected county for our residents.
Offer networking,	Diversity is	Head of Economy,	Business Monmouth and MCC's Sustainable Food Team have offered

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
signposting and, where appropriate, grant funding opportunities to support diversification of rural businesses.	supported within the workplace and with partners.	Employment and Skills	networking, support, signposting and some grant funding opportunities to support diversification of rural businesses during 2024/25.  Eight businesses were supported during 2024/25.
Provide support for the creation of 6,240 sustainable job opportunities.	More people have access to employment opportunities.	Head of Placemaking, Regeneration, Highways and Flooding	We have developed a deposit Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP). This was endorsed by Council in October ahead of a public consultation in December 2024. This will be presented to Council in autumn 2025.  We continue to provide support to anyone interested in starting their own business via the Business Monmouthshire project funded by Shared Prosperity Fund). We assisted 49 businesses in 2024/25 which exceeds the target of 30.



### 3. Work with partners and residents to build inclusive and cohesive communities

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	x
Disability	x	Sex	x
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	x
Marriage or civil partnership	x	Welsh Language	x
Pregnancy or maternity	x	Poverty	x
Race	x		

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Celebrate diversity and hold awareness raising events, including key dates in the calendar such as Black History Month and Ramadan	Increased awareness of diversity within the community	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	<p>We have held several events throughout the year.. These included the Annual Youth Conference at County Hall; Windrush Day celebration at County Hall; Young Carers Forum family fun day at Caldicot Castle; Outdoor Accessible Adventure Day at Gilwern Outdoor Centre.</p> <p>We marked Ukrainian Independence Day, by encouraging communities to join the International Campaign Making Noise for Ukraine and celebrated 30 years of Fairtrade during Fairtrade Fortnight with a host of events across the county.</p> <p>Other events we ran included: International Day of Older People event held in Caldicot; Holocaust Memorial Day Event at County Hall; International Women's</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
			<p>Day at County Hall; Commonwealth Day at County Hall</p> <p>We also hosted an Iftar event at County Hall in partnership with Monmouthshire Muslim Community Association.</p>
Support and enable the creation of community groups to ensure everyone has a voice and can participate and help shape the future of our county.	Increased diversity in consultation	<p>Equality and Welsh Language Manager</p> <p>Community Development and Delivery Manager</p>	<p>We seek input from young people through the <i>Engage 2 Change</i> forums, and our annual Youth Conference to support their involvement in council and community decision-making. This year, 3,509 pupils participated in the 'Make Your Mark' survey, highlighting concerns such as the cost of living, health and well-being, climate change, and loneliness. Youth services used this feedback to adapt their provision accordingly. Young people also contributed to our 2024/25 Play Sufficiency Assessment during Young Ambassadors Days, with feedback from 347 children—a notably high level of engagement compared to other authorities.</p> <p>We have established a resilient Heritage &amp; Culture service that offers high-quality engagement with local history. The Anti-Racist Wales project has created partnerships with groups like the Monmouthshire Muslim Community Association and Chepstow-Ukrainian Culture &amp; Heritage, resulting in working groups and a temporary exhibition at Abergavenny Museum.</p> <p>At Chepstow Museum, the 'Changing Faces of Chepstow' exhibition was developed in partnership with the Ukrainian community, including updated displays and new research.</p> <p>Councillors have been key in local projects to improve accessibility, such as installing the first tranche of dropped kerbs in Penperlleni.</p> <p>We nurture inclusive, empowered, and resilient communities across the county, ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, has the opportunity to participate, contribute, and help shape the future of their local area. Some key examples are the Wyesham Community Garden – Growing Together and the Be Community – Training for Inclusive Practice.</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
			We also connect groups with vital resources and funding opportunities.
Become an age friendly county and seek accreditation from the World Health Organisation.	Older people are supported in maintaining their health and well-being.  Accreditation from World Health Organisation	Partnerships Officer (Age Friendly Communities)	Our application to the World Health Organisation to become accredited as an age friendly county was submitted in July 2025. We will also commit to the Centre for Ageing Better's Age-Friendly Employer Pledge. This will improve work for people in their 50s and 60s to help them flourish in a multigenerational workforce.
Support the development of a forum for disabled people.	Disabled people have a forum to inform policy making and service delivery.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager  Community Development and Delivery Manager	We are visiting disabled groups to engage and build capacity and to understand their needs.  We are using our new platform 'Let's Talk Monmouthshire' to develop an Access for All Forum and conduct an online survey to ask people what they would like.
Work with partners to tackle violence against women and girls and domestic and sexual violence.	Women feel safer within their environment.	Strategic Partnership Manager	We are working with regional partners to develop a data set that will enable the VAWDASV (Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence) board to be more intelligence led. This will improve flow of information to Monmouthshire's Community Safety Partnership to work more proactively in this area on safeguarding, prevention and early help to improve outcomes for victims and survivors.
Ensure that we have a clear pathway for those	Assistance and advice is available to those with no	Strategic Partnership	We have developed guidance on a no recourse to public funds pathway and distributed it to all front-line colleagues. This should minimise the risk that the most vulnerable in our communities so not fall through any gaps in the systems

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
with no recourse to public funds.	recourse to public funds.	Manager	of support.
Improve our use of data analysis and CCTV to prevent crimes and provide evidence to the police when they do take place.	People feel safer within their environments.	Strategic Partnership Manager	<p>We continue to utilise CCTV across the county, centred around the main towns to deter and detect ASB and crime &amp; disorder.</p> <p>Work is underway to develop a strategic needs assessment for crime, and ASB in the county. This is being supported by a public survey, to garner the views of the population across Monmouthshire on how safe they feel living and working in the county. The needs assessment will form the baseline. Priorities for the Community Safety Partnership will be drawn from the evidence and will shape how best to use the resources available to tackle the main challenges.</p>
Improve housing support for refugees and asylum seekers and other marginalised groups.	Marginalised communities receive housing support.	Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships Housing and Communities Manager	<p>We are working collaboratively with the WLGA and other rural councils to improve housing options for Refugees and Asylum Seekers.</p> <p>A short-term proposal has provisionally identified private sector properties that could be used for this purpose.</p>
Become an accredited county of sanctuary and a place of sanctuary for LGBTQ+ migrants.	Monmouthshire is an accredited county of sanctuary.	Strategic Partnership Manager	<p>We are continuing to develop the arrangements that will support an application for Monmouthshire to become an accredited County of Sanctuary following cross party support at Council. A strategy will be presented to cabinet in autumn 2025.</p> <p>Work is being undertaken within the community to strengthen the cohesion across the county and develop networks of support, which will provide the evidence required to assist with the application process.</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Address period poverty and promote period dignity.	People have access to affordable period products.	Community Wellbeing Development Lead	<p>We are supporting primary and secondary schools as well as the Pupil Referral Service schools to ensure they have the period products they need along with any training required to upskill staff in their knowledge of the products and needs of young women and girls in this area. All schools have a stock of period products, including 1900 units of period pants distributed to pupils.</p> <p>We are encouraging all organisations and community groups to have a stock of free period products to give out. Each Community Development Coordinator links with community venues to ensure stock and supply levels are met. 89 community-based organisations have received funding or products as a result of the Period Dignity Grant.</p> <p>We have partnered with Womb Wisdom to promote period dignity across Monmouthshire. They have created a pamphlet for parents/guardians of disabled youth regarding menstruation and any additional support needs this demographic may have, as well as supported the Menstrual Ambassadors pilot in partnership with Monmouth Comprehensive School. They have also supported an additional needs consultation which will help inform next steps.</p> <p>We secured £71,286 of Welsh Government funding to support Period Dignity initiatives across the County.</p>

## 4. Expand our provision of community-based services that extend people's healthy life expectancy

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	x
Disability	x	Sex	x
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	x
Marriage or civil partnership	x	Welsh Language	
Pregnancy or maternity	x	Poverty	x
Race	x		

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Ensure new walking and cycling infrastructure reaches areas with the lowest rates of physical activity.	People are supported in their physical activity.	Head of Customer, Communication and Engagement	<p>We continue to support the development of sustainable transport and infrastructure through the development of active travel routes that encourage people to walk and cycle to towns, schools and local key destinations. We have expanded our active travel network including dropped kerb installation to improve the network. We created or enhanced 18 active travel routes throughout and currently have over 100 active routes in place and an additional 20 in development.</p> <p>We are extending road safety training to more schools, supporting behaviour change with more walking, cycling and scooting to school. We employed a Schools Active Travel Officer to help bring education of children</p>



Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
			in road safety together with improved safer routes for not only children but adults to walk to school and work.
Continue to provide a broad range of opportunities for people to be healthy and active including the National Exercise Referral Scheme.	People are supported in their physical activity.	Chief Officer – Customer, Culture and Wellbeing	<p>We have continued to help residents to improve their health and fitness levels through the National Exercise Referral Scheme. The percentage of participants who completed the scheme increased to 66% last year. Those completing the scheme reported improvements in balance, fitness levels and independence, and importantly their mental health. 75% of people reported that their general well-being had improved and that they felt happier.</p> <p>We relaunched our Passport to Leisure scheme in 2024 and have seen a significant number of people taking up the offer exceeding our annual target. The scheme makes fitness and wellness accessible and more affordable and includes access to gyms, swimming, classes, and more.</p> <p>We ran a targeted Food &amp; Fun programme through the summer holidays in 2024/25. This provided two healthy meals and activities for children during the summer holidays, aiming to reduce the financial burden on families. This scheme supported 617 children throughout this year. Action for Children also ran bespoke sessions for children with additional needs.</p> <p>Our Free Swim Initiative recorded 3,691 swims in year 24/25 of which 1,486 were junior sessions. Across our programmes, 2,463 children benefitted from free or subsidised play provisions in 2024/25.</p> <p>The Nature Networks programme has supported 41 community groups for health and wellbeing, engaging 492 people. The completion of the green space at Gilwern Outdoor Adventure Centre will enhance learning for PRS EOTAS learners, Re-Engage ALN Bespoke pupils, and visitors to the site. Out of the 6,582 service users we have welcomed in 2024/25 276 had Additional Learning Needs, 34 had Accessibility Requirements and 438 were eligible for Free School Meals.</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Support community groups in raising awareness of health inequalities and access to information in the most deprived areas.	A reduction in health inequalities through access to information	Head of Leisure and Wellbeing  Community Partnerships and Wellbeing Lead  Equality and Welsh Language Manager	<p>We are ensuring that all departments are contributing towards the outcomes of the Play Sufficiency Assessment to provide inclusive play opportunities for all, regardless of income or background.</p> <p>We have collaborated with partner to improve access to information in some of the most deprived areas of Monmouthshire. Through targeted support, inclusive training, and grassroots engagement, we have empowered community groups to lead change from within. These include: The Gathering Community – Abergavenny; The Be Community Training Programme; Food Access and Community Nutrition and youth and cultural engagement.</p>
Support community groups to tackle isolation and loneliness with a focus on rural communities.	A reduction in the effects of isolation and loneliness	Community Development and Delivery Manager  Equality and Welsh Language Manager	<p>We provide a varied range of activities for children, young people and adults that contribute to health and well-being. These included open-access sessions at our four youth centres, trips, events, residentials and outreach sessions. This service provides young people, including vulnerable young people, with the opportunity to foster social connections, try new skills and find new hobbies.</p> <p>We delivered two 10-week programmes for people living with dementia and their carers. Twelve community volunteers have been trained to deliver <i>object reminiscence</i> and memory cafes for older people and people living with dementia. This work has helped to reduce feelings of loneliness, boredom and has increased the self-esteem and confidence of those living with dementia. The success of this programme has resulted in Monmouthshire being selected as a case study for both Welsh Government and Age Friendly Wales.</p> <p>we have been able to further develop our work with community volunteer groups to improve and maintain public rights of way routes in their local area as part of our Paths2Communities project. This has been done in close partnership with Ramblers Cymru,</p> <p>We have seen an increase in the number of volunteer groups and over 6,381</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
			<p>volunteer hours have been delivered by members of the community.</p> <p>The project included work to improve accessibility for those with mobility issues, for example through replacing stiles and gates to ensure everyone can access our beautiful countryside. Our work is based on the Monmouthshire principle of 'least restrictive access'.</p>

## 5. Ensure our services are accessible to the public

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	
Disability	x	Sex	x
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	
Marriage or civil partnership		Welsh Language	x
Pregnancy or maternity		Poverty	x
Race	x		

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Continue to ensure our public buildings are appropriately accessible to all service users.	Buildings are fully accessible to all people.	Head of Landlord Services	<p>As part of the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund 'Destination for All' project we have commissioned an accessibility audit of attractions and visitor sites and have launched a small grants programme to support access improvements. This included the introduction of an accessible carriage on the miniature train at Old Station Tintern. We have also completed the Welcome Tintern project providing improvements to car parking, tourism signage and visitor welcome and signage.</p> <p>We have enhanced the visitor experience through improving the accessibility</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
			<p>of information on our destination website including AudioEye installation which has seen 383 clicks. We have been developing pre-visit access information for all MonLife attractions to make it easier for people with specific access needs to check whether a certain site is accessible to them.</p> <p>We delivered a Family Accessible Outdoor Adventure Day at Gilwern Outdoor Adventure in August 2024. The day was open to families who have a family member or members who have accessible requirements to include learning needs, or other impairments, to access adventurous activities. Following the event, we received our latest all terrain chair courtesy of GM4X <a href="#">GM4X – All Terrain Wheelchairs</a> to support more accessible adventures in the future.</p> <p>We also secured SPF capital funding to improve accessible toilets and a washroom for day visitors.</p> <p>We are making improvements across our heritage sites, ensuring they are accessible for all. We've completed a visitor's survey to understand how we can make the experience better for those attending and to understand why some people aren't attending.</p> <p>We have installed push button, self-opening internal doors at County Hall in Usk to make it fully accessible.</p>
Work with partners to ensure the provision of accessible toilets in our town centres.	Town centre toilets are accessible to all people.	Head of Landlord Services	In accordance with the Council's Local Toilet Strategy, we continue to give consideration to investment in MCC owned town centre toilets. A number of toilets continue to be managed and maintained via partnership arrangements with Town and Community Councils, or via third party lease with adjacent operators.
Ensure that all communications are accessible, including recognising the	All people can access communications.	Head of Customer, Communication and	We are developing on-going improvements to our website to ensure it remains accessible for all users in accordance with national guidelines known as WCAG2.2 specifications. We now track the progress of this project monthly and have seen continued progress. Our continued updates to the site see us improving month by month. We are collaborating with stakeholders to

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
needs of neurodiverse people.		Engagement	improve accessibility including enhanced screen reader performance.  We launched Let's Talk Monmouthshire in January 2025. This provides residents with a single place to visit for all consultations and digital engagement opportunities across the organisation to improve resident engagement.
Ensure we use the social model of disability when developing new services and reconfiguring existing ones.	Barriers for disabled people are removed.  Social Model of Disability is embedded across the organisation	Equality and Welsh Language Manager  Head of Social Care, Safeguarding and Health	We have created new service model called My Support Service. This is based on a reablement/enablement approach. People are supported on a 1:1 basis and are encouraged to undertake activities of their choice within their community. The aim is to help the person become independent in that activity. We recognise that some individuals will always need support in these activities and will need to access a base at times during the day.  The Monmouthshire Autism in Schools and Settings programme has been developed over the last few years with the Autism Education Trust/ National Autistic Society and is centred on the social model of disability. The programme focuses on building capacity within all our schools/ settings to develop the notion of autism as a 'difference not a deficit' and for us to develop 'enabling environments' to ensure that autistic children and young people are enabled to make progress.  The initial whole school/ setting training module of the programme 'Making Sense of Autism' has been delivered to over 95% of schools and Early Years Settings, as well as to a range of local authority officers including teams such as the Children with Disabilities team, MonLife and the Youth Service as well as school-based counsellors and play therapists. All schools and most Early Years settings have a named Autism Champion. A Monmouthshire Autism in Schools and Settings Partnership Board has been created to have ongoing oversight of the Programme as we move to roll out 'Good Autism Practice'.
Promote courses to raise digital	Accessibility is improved through	Community Hubs,	We offer Entry Level 1 and 2 Digital Literacy learning opportunities as part of the 2024–25 curriculum. This was done in partnership with Coleg Gwent,



Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
skills and literacy amongst all groups through community education courses and our community hubs.	digital skills.	Community Education & Libraries Manager	These accredited courses, awarded by Agored Cymru, are available at Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow, and Monmouth Hubs. Designed with flexibility in mind, they provide residents with a supportive and welcoming environment to re-engage with learning, helping to break down barriers and build confidence in digital skills.
Increase the number of Welsh speakers employed by the council to improve access.	Welsh speakers can fully access services in their own language.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	<p>From April 24 to March 25, we published 683 job adverts. 659 (96.49%) of these were Welsh Language Desirable and 24 (3.51%) of these were Welsh Language Essential.</p> <p>We include the Welsh language skills framework in every job advert. We also use Welsh language recruitment sites to advertise posts that are assessed as Welsh language essential, as well as some Welsh language desirable posts. By advertising roles on these dedicated recruitment sites, we make it easier for Welsh speakers to find our vacant posts, and we have successfully appointed Welsh speakers as a result.</p> <p>53 colleagues are currently completing a Welsh course. Classes started in September 24.</p>
Promote the active offer of language choice in social care.	People can access services in their language of choice.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	<p>We use the Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) to provide translation. This year 283 requests have been made to the service through social care. Tamil is the language most often requested.</p> <p>Our More Than Words Active Offer included 13 adults who requested their assessment in Welsh and were offered their assessment in Welsh. 28 children who requested their assessment in Welsh and 27 received their assessment in Welsh.</p>
Ensure that training on equalities is	Inclusive decision making is improved.	Equality and Welsh Language	We have developed and delivered Equality Training for a new Leaders/Managers Development Pathway. This includes: Protected Characteristics, Intersectionality, Inclusion and Belonging, Inclusive Language

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
available to all staff and councillors to improve inclusive decision-making.		Manager	and Unconscious Bias.  A separate equality training course is also available through Thinqi as part of the Essential Training for all of the workforce. A Reasonable Adjustment presentation is available for all colleagues.
Review Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process	The Integrated Impact Assessment process is fit for purpose and embedded.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager  Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	We have revised and updated the Integrated Impact Assessment template and guidance. This has been published on Sharepoint for all colleagues to access.  Directorate Management Teams have been informed, and it was also advertised in Compass, our internal newsletter.  A guidance film has been made which will be available to all managers via Thinqi and the Leader/Managers Development Pathway.

## 6. Ensure we have a diverse workforce and a fully inclusive workplace

This objective is related to:

Age	x	Religion or belief	x
Disability	x	Sex	x
Gender reassignment	x	Sexual orientation	x
Marriage or civil partnership		Welsh Language	x
Pregnancy or maternity		Poverty	
Race	x		

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Ensure that we attain disability confident level 2 status within the first year of this plan and then work towards levels 3.	Disability Confident Level 2 is attained.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	We attained Level 2 Disability Confident Employer in May 2024. We are continuing to work on the three-year action plan which is monitored and updated quarterly by the Accessibility Inclusion Group. We are working in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions and Welsh Government to ensure our progress and share information.

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Put in place measures to support and accommodate the needs of neurodiverse colleagues.	Neurodiverse colleagues are supported within the workplace.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	We are surveying colleagues to determine the need for support and interest in colleague networks via posters in our buildings, articles in Compass and attendance at the staff conference. These would include the needs of neurodiverse colleagues.
Actively target recruitment opportunities towards groups who are under-represented in our workforce.	Under-represented groups have more representation with the workforce.	Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	<p>Our jobs website actively promotes our desire to receive applications and enquiries from all members of the community. We have a proactive offer to those who are disabled, have a sight or hearing loss, have a learning difficulty, or are neurodiverse to get in touch to find out more about employment opportunities.</p> <p>We have a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled people as well as armed forces veterans and care leavers.</p> <p>87% of colleagues reported that they felt MCC promoted an inclusive working environment.</p>
Address the data gaps that exist across all protected characteristics (particularly ethnicity and disability) and disaggregate data by across policy areas.	Data gaps are reduced to better inform decision making.	Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	We are working to gather data to identify where there are gaps. Our gender pay gap report is published annually by 31st March each year. We will start reporting on ethnicity and disability pay gaps from 2026.
Provide access to	Diversity within the	Equality and	We have developed equality training as part of the Leadership/Manager

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
inclusion training for all staff to ensure awareness of inclusivity and diversity within the workplace	workforce is celebrated.	Welsh Language Manager Chief Officer – People, Performance and Partnerships	Development Pathway. This includes Protected Characteristics, Intersectionality, Inclusion and Belonging, Inclusive Language and Unconscious Bias. Reasonable Adjustment training has also been provided.  As covered above, equality training is a mandated module available on Thinqi, e-learning training platform for all colleagues.
Develop staff networks to raise awareness of under-represented groups within the workforce	Staff networks developed.	Equality and Welsh Language Manager	We have developed a staff survey to better understand the needs of colleagues and whether there is an appetite for colleague networks. This has been advertised through posters, at our Colleague Conferences and through internal communications. We continue to provide support for colleagues wishing to start up a new network and each network will have an HR contact  We have a Dyslexia in the Workplace Network and webpage. We are looking to further support this network with the possibility of opening it up as part of a wider Neurodiverse Network. We are ensuring that colleague networks are instigated and developed by our colleagues.  We also hold a Menopause Café last Wednesday of every month (online).

## 7. Reduce the gender pay gap

This objective is related to:

Age		Religion or belief	
Disability		Sex	x
Gender reassignment		Sexual orientation	
Marriage or civil partnership		Welsh Language	
Pregnancy or maternity	x	Poverty	x
Race			

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Ensure that career pathways do not limit the ability of part-time staff to progress into senior roles.	Part time staff are not limited in progressing into senior roles.	Head of HR	Our Flexible Working Policy supports colleagues' entitlement to request part time working. In conjunction with this, our Recruitment and Selection Policy and Protection of Employment Policy support all colleagues, including those working part time hours, into new and senior roles. Our People Strategy aims to further develop strategic workforce planning practices, across the organisation, and this will include evolving a greater number of career pathways, in accordance with associated policy reviews, which will promote the ability of part-time staff to progress into senior roles.



Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress
Continue to operate a transparent job evaluation scheme to ensure equitable pay rates.	Equitable pay rates are ensured.	Head of HR	The GLPC (Greater Provincial London Council) Scheme is used for all National Joint Council roles in Monmouthshire County Council. New governance arrangements around the usage of this scheme, within the organisation, were put in place in October 2024 and associated revised policy and guidance documents were approved in January 2025, to ensure equitable pay rates. Chief Officer Job Evaluation Schemes are currently being reviewed and considered for implementation, relating to all JNC (Joint Negotiating Committee) roles in Monmouthshire County Council, to ensure equitable pay rates for senior officers.
Publish information on the gender pay gap annually, evaluate the reasons for the difference in pay and explore appropriate actions to address them.	Annual publication of gender pay gap information and actions to address this are explored.	Head of HR	Our Gender Pay Gap Report was published in March 2025, relating to data as of 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024. Our Gender Pay Gap Report was published in March 2025, relating to data as of 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024. This report evaluates the reasons for the differences in pay between genders and explores appropriate actions to address these reasons. <a href="#">Gender-Pay-Gap-Report-2025.pdf</a>