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CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

Human Rights and Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028

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Cyngor **Abertawe**
Swansea Council



We are proud to present Swansea Council's Human Rights and Strategic Equality Plan for 2024 - 2028.

Equality has always been at the heart of our work, service delivery and values at Swansea Council. We became Wales' first Human Rights City in 2022, and this is the first time we have combined our Human Rights commitments with our Strategic Equality Plan. This plan reflects our dedication to upholding the principles of human rights, equality and inclusion and sets the stage for a future where every resident can flourish and contribute to our city – where everyone counts.

We have created our six human rights and strategic equality objectives after careful consideration of the issues facing us nationally and most importantly, by engaging and listening to our residents' and stakeholders' concerns. Within this plan you will see a number of commitments that we will carry out to achieve the objectives alongside a detailed action plan.

With this plan we aim to break down the barriers that our most vulnerable and marginalised residents face and ensure that everyone in our city has equal access to opportunities, resources and to the decision-making process. We will consistently review and share our progress on meeting our objectives to make sure we are achieving what we have set out in this plan, and to ensure our plan remains relevant to the people we serve.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has played a role in shaping this plan and we look forward to working together to create an equal, diverse, safe and resilient Human Rights City.

With thanks

Councillor Rob Stewart
Leader of Swansea Council

Martin Nicholls
Chief Executive of Swansea Council



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SECTION 1

Introduction

Swansea is a Human Rights City. This is the first time we have combined our Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) with our Human Rights commitments. This plan will outline how we will continue to meet our commitments to human rights and equality, and how we will meet our legal obligations within the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Human Rights City

Swansea Council and our **Public Service Board** partners declared itself a Human Rights City in December 2022, following 18 months of foundation work and engagement.

We intend to deliver on our pledge on being a Human Rights City by placing human rights at the centre of our decision making by:

- Engaging our communities and those we serve in the realisation of their human rights.
- Building upon work which is taking place across the city informed by a commitment to human rights and social justice.
- Making human rights the foundation of our service planning and delivery.
- Recognising human rights as fundamental to our policies and our actions individually and collectively.

Supporting Plans

This plan cannot be a stand-alone document. It has very close links to a number of key Council work areas, for example, **Corporate Plan**, **Tackling Poverty Strategy**, Community Cohesion, **Local Well-being Plan**, **Welsh Language**, Coproduction Strategy, **Local Development Plan**, Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy and Safer Swansea Strategy.

Equality is a key theme throughout all of this work; in developing this Plan we have engaged with colleagues and residents to ensure that we build on current and planned work.

SECTION 2

The Legislative Context

The Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), introduced under the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act'), is made up of a general equality duty, supported by specific duties.

The General Equality Duty

The aim of the general equality duty is to ensure that public authorities and those carrying out a public function consider how they can positively contribute to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in their day-to-day activities. In exercising their functions, public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality of opportunity in the second aim involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected characteristic 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 Act describes fostering good relations in the third aim as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Meeting the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others, as long as this does not contravene other provisions within the Act.

The Specific Duties

All public bodies are required to meet these specific duties in order to comply with the general duty:

- To eliminate discrimination.
- To advance equality of opportunity.
- To foster good relations.

The Welsh Government introduced the '[Equality Act 2010 \(Statutory Duties\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2011](#)' setting out the requirements for Wales.

Who is protected under the Equality Act 2010?

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination, victimisation and harassment on the basis of the following characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership. It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of their protected characteristic.

Well-being and Future Generations Act

We have a law in Wales that helps us all work together to improve our environment, our economy, our society and our culture. For people, for our planet. For now, and for our future. This is called the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

As a Council, through this Act, we have a duty to carry out development in a sustainable way and contribute to the 7 national well-being goals for Wales. The well-being goals are a prosperous Wales, a resilient Wales, a healthier Wales, a more equal Wales, a Wales of more cohesive communities, a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, and a globally responsive Wales. We have to create and publish our own well-being objectives in a plan and ensure they are in our Corporate plan. This makes sure that future generations have at least the same quality of life as we do now. This act also provides for better decision-making by ensuring that public bodies:

- take account of the long term
- help to prevent problems occurring or getting worse
- take an integrated approach
- take a collaborative approach
- consider and involve people of all ages and diversity.

Human Rights Act

The Human Rights Act is a law which protects our Human Rights in the UK. Every person has Human Rights. They cannot be taken from you, but sometimes, some of them can be limited to protect you or others.

As a Council, we have a duty to respect, protect and fulfil your Human Rights. We have 16 Human Rights in UK law.

These are the right to:

Life, be free from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, be free from slavery and forced labour, liberty, a fair trial, not be punished for something that wasn't against the law when you did it, respect for private and family life, home and correspondence, freedom of thought conscience and religion, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, marry and start a family, be free from discrimination, peaceful and enjoyment of possessions, education, free elections and Abolition of the death penalty.

Human Rights Principled Approach

As part of the Council's commitment to being a Human Rights City, we have pledged to put Human Rights at the centre of our decisions. To achieve this, we have a **plan** to use a Human Rights principled approach. The principles are:

- **Participation** – This means making sure good quality arrangements are in place to ensure people are listened to and their opinion is heard in decisions that affect them.
- **Empowerment** – This means promoting rights to people, so they feel able to use them.
- **Embedding** – This means having systems in place to write down and evidence how we give thought to the impact of decisions on Human Rights. We will make sure staff understand the Human Rights Act and how their work impacts on Human Rights.
- **Accountability** – This means having systems in place to report on what we are doing to make rights a reality for residents and visitors to Swansea.
- **Non-discrimination** – This means making efforts to ensure people who may be less likely to access their rights, have an equal opportunity to do so.

SECTION 3 About Us

The latest population estimates for the City and County of Swansea (2021) is 238,500, that makes us the second highest population of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales.

We have 75 elected Councillors in Swansea representing 32 wards (areas). Swansea Council employs around 11,000 people across 5 Directorates; Finance, Education, Place, Social Services and Corporate Services. We are one of the largest employers in Swansea.

Swansea Council is strongly committed to equalities. Equalities training is mandatory for all new employees, and we undertake a refresher of the training every 3 years. Our Human Resources department, along with our equalities team, revise and refresh the content of the training, ensuring it is up-to-date and any new legislation from Welsh or UK Governments is included.

Following the publication of the 2021 Census' alongside other annual data sources, we have summarised a series of key equalities indicators for the City & County of Swansea. This helps us to understand the diversity of Swansea's population. Some of the key headlines are outlined below:

KEY HEADLINES FROM THE CENSUS 2021 TELLS US:

AGE | We have a higher number of young people aged 16 – 24, (13%), than the Wales and UK average. Our older population is growing - 20.5% of people are 65 and over.

DISABILITY | In Swansea, 22.4% are disabled, this figure is higher than the Wales and UK average.

GENDER REASSIGNMENT (GENDER IDENTITY) | 864 people in Swansea (0.4% of all aged 16 and over) said the gender they identified with is not the same as their sex registered at birth.

MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP | We have a higher proportion of adults (39.9%) who have never married or registered a civil partnership than the national averages.

PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY | Over the last five years, numbers of conceptions and births have fallen both in Swansea and nationally.

Fertility rates are currently lower than national average for most age groups.

RACE | Swansea has a higher proportion of people in non-white ethnic groups (8.6%) than the Wales average. The largest non-white ethnic group in Swansea in 2021 was 'Bangladeshi' (around 2,900 people or 1.2%).

The school Census (2023), suggest that the number and proportion of children from non-White ethnic groups has increased over the past five years.

RELIGION OR BELIEF | Just over 40% of Swansea's population identified as Christian.

The number of people in Swansea affiliated with another religion increased between 2011 and 2021; the largest being Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu respectively.

The number of people stating they had no religion increased significantly between Censuses, (+39%).

SEX | Male to female ratios in Swansea change at different life stages;

- more males than females in Swansea at ages 0-15
 - an equal split for people aged 16-64
 - more females than males at ages 65 and over.
-

SEXUAL ORIENTATION | The 2021 Census collected data on sexual orientation for the first time, therefore comparisons cannot be made from the past.

3.4% of Swansea residents over 16 identify as LGBTQ+ compared to 2.7% in Wales.

You can find more information about the Swansea Population on our website.

[Equalities Statistics Review - Swansea](#)

SECTION 4

How We Developed Our Human Rights and Equality Objectives

The development of this plan was overseen by the Council's Strategic Equality and Future Generations Board. The purpose of the Board is to provide strategic oversight for the Council's responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Well-being and Future Generations Act. It was agreed to have early and open engagement, to make use of previous engagement, to be honest and transparent, to use existing evidence, that budgets need to be considered and to have a monitoring and evaluation process included.

Please see our accompanying engagement report for full details.

Early Engagement for this plan

We asked the two following questions:

What do you think are the most significant inequality issues which affect people in Swansea?

What actions do you think the Council can take to address significant inequality issues in Swansea?

We held a number of engagement sessions online and published a survey, in order to gather people's thoughts on the above questions. These questions were also included within our wider Residents survey. We visited a number of existing networks and forums across the city, including the Council's LGBTQ+ forum, Disability Liaison Group and asylum seekers and refugee groups.

Themes and results from our early engagement

The main issues and themes that were identified in this engagement are: Discrimination, Poverty, Housing, Communities, Transport, Work, Education, Social Care, Health and Digital Inclusion.

Previous engagement and consultation

We looked at recent engagement and consultations that have happened in Swansea Council relating to equality and diversity. They have been used to inform this plan, including:

Swansea's Human Rights Engagement Report (2022), the Council's Corporate Plan consultation results (2023) and the Residents Survey (2024). For more information on this please see engagement report.

We also looked at the evidence provided by 'Is Wales Fairer?' 2023 report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission Wales, and the Census data 2021.

Themes and issues from previous engagement and consultation

Council's Corporate Plan 2023-28: Safeguarding people from harm, Improving Education and Skills, Transforming our Economy and Infrastructure, Tackling Poverty and Enabling Communities, Delivering on Nature Recovery and Climate Change and Transformation and Financial Resilience.

Council's Revenue Budget 2023-24: Deliver services in a different way, rather than lose them, Social Services and Education a future priority, Care for Older People and Disabled Adults, Street/Road Repairs, Housing and Homelessness, Keeping Children Safe, Tackling Poverty and Parks and Green Spaces.

Swansea Public Services Board – Assessment of Local Well-being: Social well-being: (mental health, physical health, crime and safety), Economic well-being: (good employment opportunities, decent income, learning opportunities), Environmental well-being: (waste and recycling, nature, air quality) and Cultural well-being: (cultural assets including, places and people, community participation, volunteering and arts, heritage).

Children and young people: Safety and feeling safe in our community, Improved sports, equality and facilities, Mental health, Climate change and environmental awareness, Black, Asian, Minority ethnic equality, LGBTQ+, Substance abuse and vaping and Visible and invisible disability awareness and equality.

Tackling Poverty: Digital Inclusion, Community support, Information, guidance and advice, Stigma and discrimination, Child poverty, Tackling and preventing homelessness and Health and well-being.

Residents Survey: Discrimination, Poverty, Housing, Communities, Transport and Work.

'It was agreed to have early and open engagement, to make use of previous engagement, to be honest and transparent, to use existing evidence, that budgets need to be considered and to have a monitoring and evaluation process included'

SECTION 5

Our Human Rights and Strategic Equality Objectives 2024-28

We are committed to embedding Human Rights, equality and diversity through all that we do as a Council.

Our human rights and strategic equality objectives for 2024-28 are:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 Tackling Poverty | 4 Domestic Abuse and Violence |
| 2 Vulnerable Children and Families | 5 Equality and Human Rights |
| 3 Tackling Discrimination | 6 Workforce |

In our accompanying action plan, we have identified for each of our objectives and commitments, the relevant protected characteristics they support and how they deliver on a Human Rights principled approach.

Objective One: Tackling Poverty

Working together to address the causes and effect of poverty on people and communities, eradicating inequalities for those who are affected by poverty.

Why is this an objective?

Poverty was identified as a main issue in our early engagement on this plan. It is the top priority in our Human Rights City work. It is a main priority in our Corporate plan and the 'Is Wales Fairer?' report told us poverty remains consistently high in Wales.

To deliver this objective:

- We will...** Deliver the Equity in Education Strategy which will take actions to reduce the impact of poverty on learners and meet our responsibilities as corporate parents.
- We will...** Deliver the Council's Tackling Poverty Strategy which will tackle the causes and effect of poverty on people and communities.
- We will...** Deliver a diverse and an inclusive programme for arts, cultural, sporting and heritage events across the city and communities, which will support participation, economic growth and encourage inclusion.
- We will...** Increase the availability and quality of social housing which is suitable for people's needs, through our Mores Homes Delivery Programme and working with our Registered Social Landlords partners.

Objective Two: Vulnerable Children and families

Understanding what matters to children and families and working together to find creative solutions.

Why is this an objective?

The 'Is Wales Fairer?' report told us the number of children looked after by Local Authorities in Wales has seen a significant increase in recent years. It is a priority for our Human Rights City work. Education was a main theme identified in our early engagement and safeguarding people from harm is the top priority for us in our Corporate plan.

To deliver this objective:

We will... Support children and young people to live safely at home with their family, by working with people in partnership and providing the right support at the right time.

We will... Deliver the Education Inclusion Strategy which will support our most vulnerable learners.

We will... Co-produce creative solutions with care experienced children and young people to deliver our corporate parenting pledges.

We will... Develop and deliver the Education Accessibility Strategy to make our schools more accessible to disabled learners.

We will... Uphold Children's Rights as part of the Council's everyday business, embedding the 'Right Way' approach.

'Education was a main theme identified in our early engagement and safeguarding people from harm is the top priority for us in our Corporate plan'

Objective Three: Tackling Discrimination

Reduce inequalities and barriers that exist within our communities and services.

Why is this an objective?

Tackling discrimination is a wide reaching and complex issue affecting all people with protected characteristics. It was the top theme in our early engagement and also a priority in our Human Rights City work. The 'Is Wales Fairer?' report told us that there has been an increase in the number of reported incidents of Hate Crime.

To deliver this objective:

- We will...** Implement the relevant steps for the Council within Welsh Government's All Wales Anti-Racist Action Plan and the LGBTQ+ Action Plan.
- We will...** Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing our services, by exploring demand, customer's needs and any gaps across the council.
- We will...** Deliver Welsh Government's Community Cohesion Programme, focusing on developing community cohesion, community engagement and building resilient communities.
- We will...** Develop and deliver the Education Equalities Strategy to bring together work on school Strategic Equality Plans, Anti-racism and anti-bullying to strengthen our approach to equalities in schools.
- We will...** Deliver the Tackling Hate Crime, Community Tensions and Extremism priorities in the Safer Swansea Community Safety Strategy 2023- 2026.

'Tackling discrimination is a wide reaching and complex issue affecting all people with protected characteristics'

Objective Four: Domestic Abuse and Violence

We want everyone who lives in Swansea to be safe, happy and healthy.

We want them to be free from all types of abuse.

Why is this an objective?

Addressing Domestic abuse and violence is a priority in our Human Rights City work. Safeguarding people from harm is also a priority in our Corporate plan and concern for people's safety in Swansea featured highly in all engagement.

To deliver this objective:

We will... Deliver the Safer Swansea Strategy, safeguarding those at risk of violence & exploitation.

We will... Deliver the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence strategy and action plan.

Objective Five: Equality and Human Rights

To work with our partners to create and embrace a vision of a vibrant, diverse, fair and safe city where everyone counts.

Why is this an objective?

As we became a Human Rights City our engagement told us it was important to work with our partners and our residents to raise awareness of what Human Rights are and what they mean to people in their everyday lives. Embedding Human Rights is in our Corporate plan and our Public Service Board's Well-being plan, and by doing this we address inequalities that people face in Swansea.

To deliver this objective:

We will... Develop a greater understanding and recognition of cultural rights, supporting the wellbeing, opportunities and relationships between people with protected characteristics.

We will... Embed the principles of human rights across our work, empowering residents and visitors of Swansea to support their rights.

We will... Effectively consult, engage, and involve our communities in the design and the delivery of our policies and services to ensure they meet people's needs.

We will... Develop and deliver a Welsh language skills strategy ensuring schools are supported to develop learners' skills, so they can speak Welsh with confidence when they leave school.

Objective Six: Workforce

To be an inclusive and diverse workforce.

Why is this an objective?

As an organisation we have to report on our gender pay gap and have actions to reduce the gap. We recognise that our workforce needs to reflect the protected characteristics of our communities. Work inequalities feature highly in our early engagement and is a theme throughout the 'Is Wales Fairer?' report.

To deliver this objective:

- We will...** Report on the Council's gender pay gap, identify actions to reduce any emerging gap.
- We will...** Deliver the Equality in the Workplace theme of the Workforce Strategy to build an environment that creates diversity, promotes equality, ensuring a diverse and inclusive workforce across the council.
- We will...** Develop and promote our equality staff networks to ensure our staff have the opportunity to influence policy development.
- We will...** Collect the data of our workforce and take action to ensure our workforce reflects the communities we serve.

'As an organisation we have to report on our gender pay gap and have actions to reduce the gap'

SECTION 6

Monitoring and Evaluation

This Human Rights and Strategic Equality plan will be assessed annually by departments who will report on the progress made against their actions. The delivery of this plan will also be assessed the Council's Strategic Equalities and Future Generations Board, which will identify areas for policy review and development.

As part of our Human Rights City commitments, we will report on the progress of our Human Rights and Strategic Equality Plan to Swansea's Public Service Board every 3 months. We have also established a **Human Rights Stakeholder Panel**. This panel is open for any member of the public or representatives of a Swansea based organisation to join. They will receive news and updates of the Council's and our partner's work on Human Rights and have the opportunity to ask us questions and help us to identify any gaps in our work at an annual on-line meeting.

Integrated Impact Assessments

It is a legal requirement to assess the likely impact on people sharing each protected characteristic against decisions we make as a Council. We do this by a process called Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA). We examine whether a new or existing function, service, policy, procedure, strategy, plan or project the Council delivers or procures, affects any person or group of persons in a negative or positive way.

By carrying out this IIA process, we meet our legal requirements within the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being and Future Generation Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure. As a Council we have taken extra steps to strengthen this process by including the impacts on Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights, carers and Community Cohesion. We also look at the intersectionality of people with protected characteristics and the cumulative impact of our decisions.

Some benefits of undertaking an IIA:

This is a key tool to allow us to monitor and evaluate our work in Human Rights and equality. IIAs allow us to gain a better understanding of those who may be impacted by the policy or practice using relevant equality information to ensure services become more accessible and inclusive. Through the IIA process we can identify potential problems and unintended consequences as well as highlighting fair and equal practice. They also improve the planning process which will make decisions proactive rather than reactive, reducing financial and reputational risks. This in turn will show that decisions are planned well and the views of those affected have been taken into account. The process also allows us to recognise and remove any inappropriate practices and institutional discrimination. Finally, the IIA process ensures we put Welsh and English language on an equal footing and that decisions are made that safeguard and promote the use of the Welsh language.

