Human Rights and Strategic Equality Plan Engagement Report 2024-2028

Engagement Process

The development of our Human Rights and Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 was overseen by the Strategic Equality and Future Board. The Board is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Cultural Services and Equalities and membership also includes the Cabinet Member for Well-being and the Councillor Champion for Diversity, in addition to a range of Officers who have a responsibility to provide advice in relation to equality and diversity. The purpose of the Board is to provide strategic oversight in relation to the Council's responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty. Prior to the development of the HRSEP 2024-28 the Board agreed the following principles to inform the process:

- Early and open engagement - in relation to the identification of equality issues and potential steps (actions),
- Proportionate engagement and building on previous conversations - making use of previous consultation and engagement work,
- Honesty and transparency - in relation to engagement, feedback to people and the potential steps the Council can take,
- Evidence based - the development of strategic equality objectives, should be informed by the results of the early engagement process *and* the wider evidence base,
- Budgetary cover - all steps (actions) which sit underneath the strategic equality objectives - should only be included if there is a budget to cover it ie it is included within the Council's Corporate Plan and the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan,
- Monitoring and evaluation - all strategic equality objectives and steps (actions) should include measures of success and KPIs where possible to monitor progress and evaluate outcomes.

Engagement

The early engagement phase commenced in September 2023 with the formation an internal cross-departmental SEP engagement group. Membership of the group was drawn from all directorates and services across the Council including Social Services, Education, Housing, Place and Access to Services. The purpose of the group was to champion and support engagement activities by:

- identifying any recent engagement/consultation undertaken in relation to equality and diversity issues,
- identifying any existing equalities groups, the lead point of contact/facilitator,
- outlining any future meetings/events, places in which people can identify equality and diversity issues,
- supporting the development of an engagement plan,
- supporting the development of a resource pack, key questions and or identify any other material, process or resources which can help groups identify key equality issues,
- identifying any gaps in relation to consultation with groups with protected characteristics and suggest ways in which these can be filled,
- sense checking the information gained from the engagement in order to inform the draft equality objectives.
- highlighting any key risks and issues in terms of engagement to the Strategic Equalities and Future Generations Board and subsequently to CMT.

Previous engagement and consultation

A review of recent engagement /consultation undertaken in relation to equality and diversity issues identified a number of key recent engagement and consultation products which could be used to inform the development of the plan and the strategic equality objectives:

- Swansea's Human Rights Engagement Report (2022),
- Swansea's Human Rights Action Plan Engagement Report (2023),
- the Council's Corporate Plan – consultation results (2023),
- the Council's – Revenue Budget – consultation results (2023),
- Swansea Public Services Board (2022) PSB Engagement: Assessment of Local Well-Being,
- Safer Swansea: Community Engagement Days (2022),
- Hearing the Voices of Children and Young People (2023)
- Children and Young People – Shared Values (2023), White Ribbon Day (2022) and Community Murals (2022),
- the Council's Tackling Poverty Strategy

Themes and issues from previous engagement and consultation

Engagement	Themes and issues
Swansea Human Rights	1) Tackling Poverty 2) Vulnerable Children and Families 3) Tackling Discrimination 4) Domestic Violence and Abuse 5) Human Rights Awareness
Council's Corporate Plan 2023-28	1) Safeguarding people from harm 2) Improving Education and Skills 3) Transforming our Economy and Infrastructure 4) Tackling Poverty and Enabling Communities 5) Delivering on Nature Recovery and Climate Change. 6) Transformation and Financial Resilience
Council's Revenue Budget 2023-24	1) Deliver services in a different way, rather than lose them. 2) Social Services and Education a future priority. 3) Care for Older People and Disabled Adults, Street/Road Repairs, Housing and Homelessness, Keeping Children Safe, Tackling Poverty and Parks & Green Spaces.
Swansea Public Services Board – Assessment of Local Well-being	1) Social well-being: (mental health, physical health crime and safety) 2) Economic well-being: (good employment opportunities, decent income, learning opportunities)

	3) Environmental well-being: (waste and recycling, nature, air quality) 4) Cultural well-being: (cultural assets inc. places/people, community participation /volunteering and arts/heritage
Various - Children and Young People	1) Safety and feeling safe in our community 2) Improved sports, equality and facilities 3) Mental health 4) Climate change and environmental awareness 5) Black, Asian, Minority, Ethnic – equality 6) LGBTQ+ 7) Substance abuse and vaping 8) Visible and invisible disability awareness and equality
Tackling Poverty	1) Digital inclusion 2) Community support 3) Information, guidance and advice 4) Stigma and discrimination 5) Child poverty 6) Tackling and preventing homelessness 7) Health and well-being

Methodology

(i) Groups

In relation to identifying existing equalities groups and any future meetings/events, places in which people can identify equality and diversity issues, members of the HRSEP engagement group identified key contacts, groups, and future planned/ meeting events. A further a 'snowballing' sampling technique was employed - whereby these key contacts were asked to identify other potential participants. This technique resulted in additional participants being recruited within Swansea University, the Public Health Wales and representatives of the Pubic Services Board.

Table 1 below shows the reach of the early engagement work with groups of people with protected characteristics[1] (including 3 additional considerations relevant for Swansea in relation to equality and diversity):

<u>**Table 1: Reach of Early Engagement Work**</u>

Event / Session	Age	Disability	Gender re-assignment	Pregnancy and Maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Marriage / Civil Partnership	Sex	Sexual Orientation	Socio-economic ity	Welsh language	Future Generations	Human Rights City
Interfaith representatives	✓	✓			✓	✓							✓

[1] Mapping by protected characteristics and the three additional considerations for Swansea was assessed on the basis of issues/potential actions mentioned by the group, rather than the composition of group members. These groups should not be considered to be representative of all groups of people with protected characteristics, but a qualitative insight into some of the issues and potential actions.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
SEP engagement session x 2					✔	✔				✔		✔	✔
Collaboration Station x 2	✔	✔			✔		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Council -LGBT Forum			✔					✔	✔	✔			✔
Parents/Carers Forum		✔										✔	
Councillor Champions	✔				✔					✔		✔	
Asylum seekers and refuges					✔	✔				✔			✔
Disability Liaison Group		✔											
LAC co-ordinators	✔	✔						✔		✔			
Domiciliary Care Providers	✔				✔			✔	✔				
PSB/Fire Service event	✔									✔			✔
Children's Rights Day	✔	✔	✔		✔	✔		✔		✔		✔	✔
Your Voice Advocacy	✔	✔		✔					✔	✔			

(ii) Data and information tools and "key questions"

In order to inform the early engage process, the Council's HRSEP Engagement group informed the development of a resource pack and presentation, including the development of "key questions" which could be used to identify issues and potential actions, using a range of different data and information collection methods and tools. "Key questions" were agreed to ensure that there was a coherent theme of inquiry across the different types of data and information collection tools and methods used.

The main data and information collection methods and tools were:

- on-line and face to face focus groups with existing equality groups/network (see Table 1 above),
- discussion with individuals at drop in events such as the 1stop shop at Swansea Waterfront museum, the Parents Carers Forum, Your Voice Advocacy and Children Rights Day,
- the development of an on-line early engagement questionnaire, hosted on the Council's website,
- the inclusion of specific questions on equality and diversity within Swansea Council's residents' survey.

Taking into account the principles agreed at the outset of the engagement process, two open ended key questions were developed and were used across all the methods of data and information collection for the purposes of engagement:

- 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 ?

Opportunities to participate in the engagement process, were promoted internally through our corporate communications channels such as, Staffnet, newsletters and the Chief Executive's Blog. Members of the SEP engagement group also promoted information about the engagement through their own directorate and service specific forums and newsletters such as our Tackling Poverty Forum and tenant participation mechanisms. Finally, we also raised awareness of the engagement process with our partners such as Swansea Public Services Board, Swansea University and Swansea Council for Voluntary Services who disseminated the links to our surveys and outlined other ways to participate in the process by joining a focus group or attending a group meeting/event or drop in session.

Results from engagement

A summary of the results from the residents survey is available below

Summary of key findings from residents' survey 2023	
Themes	**Sub-themes**
Discrimination (45%)	Disability: issues related to access (e.g buildings, built environment, parking, transport, toilets) a lack of support/services, and want increased participation in decision making. Racism: examples of racism (of black and minority ethnic people) and other groups encountering racism (e,g non Welsh), xenophobic views and localism. Ageism: old and young people. Old people - accessing services, support, loneliness and isolation. Young people – housing, employment and access to mental health support. Homophobia and Transphobia - hate crime not being dealt with effectively after reporting it and community events being marginalised. Sexism/gender – ltd employment opportunities, unequal pay, women's rights, safety and freedom from abuse and harassment. Language – Welsh Language bias. Other languages and formats. Digital - difficulties relating to accessing and paying for services on-line.
Poverty (21%)	Inability to secure a sufficient income, resources and access to services. Poverty - a driver of significant inequality, but also a consequence and outcome of inequality. Inequality between different geographical communities – income and wealth divide.

Housing (13%)	Difficulty accessing good quality affordable social housing.

Private rented sector – expensive and poor quality.
Specific gaps in housing for young people.

Perceptions of unfairness in relation to the allocation of social housing.

Homelessness. |

Summary of key findings from residents' survey 2023	
Themes	**Sub-themes**
Communities (13%)	Substance misuse (drugs and alcohol) and crime (including ASB and the fear of crime).

Lack of community based services and support.

Inequalities between geographical communities within Swansea. |
| Transport (9%) | Provision, accessibility and affordability of public transport - especially buses.

Public transport impacts - access to employment and services.

Vulnerable groups to transport poverty – the elderly, young people and people in poverty. |
| Work (9%) | Difficulty accessing good quality well paid jobs.

Public transport, age, caring responsibilities (inc. childcare).

Gender pay gap.

Perception that some working people are worse off, than people who don't work |
| Health (6%) | Difficulty accessing some services/provision, waiting lists.

Lack of support for mental health. |
| Education (4%) | Impact of poverty on education and long term outcomes. |

	Poverty impacting ability to participate in education fully. Accessing inclusive education. Neurodiversity.
Social care (3%)	Accessing social care and a lack of provision. Lack of support for the elderly, people with disabilities and carers. Geographical disparities in terms of access and perceived support.
Digital (2%)	Difficulties related to accessing services on-line – older people and young people with additional learning needs/disabilities.

Residents' Survey

Within the Council's residents questionnaire, a total of 676 people responded to a question which asked people to identify the most significant inequality issues in Swansea. Out of the 676 responses, 31 gave no affirmative answer, 25 said that they did not think there were any significant inequality issues in Swansea and a further 6 were unsure. Therefore the base for analysis, was calculated as 614.

Most significant inequality issues in Swansea

Respondents were asked two open ended question and answers were subsequently analysed using a coding frame. Initial themes were drafted on the basis of key themes in the wider evidence base on equality and diversity, previous consultation work and the number of mentions within the questionnaire. Each response was coded according to the theme(s) mentioned. Responses which included more than one theme were coded according to each theme mentioned. Therefore responses which included multiple themes were accorded to each theme mentioned. The results of the questionnaire below refer to the number and proportion of times the theme was mentioned, rather than simply the number and proportion of respondents.

The most frequently cited significant inequality issues were as follows:

- **Discrimination, including perceptions of fairness, dignity and respect**. This issue was mentioned by just under half of all respondents (43% n=265). Out of those respondents who mentioned this issue, inequality was cited in relation to disability, racism, age, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, gender and language.

  Almost 1 in 4 people (24% n=64) who mentioned discrimination as a significant inequality issue, mentioned this issue in relation to disability. Respondents perceived **disability** as a significant inequality issue in relation to access issues, a lack of support/services and participation in decision making. In terms of disability and access issues, several mentions were made of difficulties relating to the physical access to buildings and the built environment, parking and transport:

Out of those respondents who mentioned discrimination, 15% (n=41) explicitly mentioned **racism**, as a significant inequality in Swansea:

Out of those respondents who mentioned discrimination, 16% (*n*=42) explicitly mentioned **age** (both older people and young people), as a significant inequality issue in Swansea. In terms of older people, age discrimination was mentioned in general terms and in relation to difficulties associated with accessing services, support, loneliness and isolation.

Out of those respondents who mentioned discrimination, 4% (n=12) explicitly mentioned **homophobia**, as a significant inequality issue. Examples were given in relation to reported hate crime not being dealt with effectively and community events being marginalised. Out of those respondents who mentioned discrimination, 4% (n=12) explicitly mentioned **sex** and **gender**, as a significant inequality issue in Swansea. Examples were given in relation differences in terms of employment and progression and pay. Reference was also made by a couple of respondents about inequality experienced by women in relation to biological sex and socially constructed gender roles.

A small number of respondents identified the **Welsh Language** as a significant inequality in Swansea (*n*=8) . In some cases, it was difficult to understand in what ways the Welsh Language was a driver of inequality as some respondents had simply written "the Welsh Language" within the questionnaire. However, a small number of respondents suggested that the Welsh Language was given priority/bias over the English Language.

- **Poverty**. Just over a fifth (21% *n*= 132 respondents) who identified a significant inequality issue in Swansea, mentioned poverty in some respect. Almost 60% of respondents (*n*=78) specifically identified poverty general terms as being a key driver of inequality in Swansea.

  Some respondents mentioned poverty as significant inequality in terms of an inability to secure a sufficient income, resources or access to services.

  Other respondents mentioned the impact of poverty as being a driver of significant inequality and/or poverty being the outcome of other long term issues. Some respondents mentioned poverty in terms of inequality *between* different communities within Swansea.

- **Housing**. Out of those respondents who identified a significant inequality issue 13% (*n*=82) mentioned housing as an area of inequality. The majority of respondents 65% (*n*=54) who identified housing as significant inequality issue suggested that there were difficulties related to accessing social housing and the affordability of good quality housing in the private rented sector.

  Some participants identified particular problems with the private rented sector which was perceived as more expensive and poorer quality than social housing.

  Specific gaps in housing for young people were mentioned by a few respondents.

  There was also a perception by a few respondents that some aspects of the social housing allocation policy was unfair.

  Just over a third of respondents (38%, n= 31) who identified housing as a significant inequality issues mentioned homelessness and related support as issue

- **Communities**. Just over 10% of respondents who identified a significant inequality issue (13% n=79) mentioned community based issues as an area of inequality. Examples included substance misuse, crime and community safety, a lack of community based services and inequalities between specific communities within Swansea.

  Respondents mentioned perceptions of drug addiction and alcohol abuse sometimes manifesting the fear of crime and feeling unsafe.

  Mention was also made of a lack of community based support and provision.

  Out of those respondents who identified community issues as a significant inequality issue in Swansea, around a third (31%) mentioned widening inequalities between particular geographical communities in Swansea.

- **Transport.** Out of those respondents who identified a significant inequality issue 9% (*n*=57) mentioned transport as an area of inequality. Around two thirds of respondents 66% (*n*=37) who identified transport as significant inequality issue suggested that there were difficulties related to the provision, accessibility and affordability of public transport.

  Some respondents identified transport as an essential resource in terms of accessing employment, health services and other resources

  Out of those respondents who identified transport as a significant inequality issue, the inadequacy of bus travel as a form of public transport, was mentioned the most frequently by this group.

  Some respondents mentioned particular groups of people such as the elderly, young people, people with disabilities and people living in poverty as being particularly at risk of the impact of poor public transport.

- **Work.** Just under 1 in 10 respondents (9% *n*=55) mentioned work as a significant inequality in Swansea. Out of these respondents over a third (36% *n*= 20) who mentioned work as a significant inequality, made reference to the difficulty associated with accessing good quality well paid work.

  One of the main barriers to employment mentioned by several respondents was transport. Other barriers to employment mentioned were in relation to age and caring responsibilities.

  A couple of respondents also mentioned perceptions relating to a gender pay gap.

  A final theme identified by respondents who mentioned work as a significant inequality in Swansea was related to the lack of support for working people compared to people who are not working

- **Education.** A small number of respondents (4%, *n*= 26) identified education as a significant inequality issue. Of those respondents who mentioned education, several respondents mentioned inequality in terms of the relationship between poverty and education and long term outcomes.

A couple of respondents mentioned inequality in relation to the ability to children and young people being able to participate fully in education.
A few respondents also perceived inequalities in relation to catering for children with additional learning needs.

- **Social Care.** A small number of respondents (3%, *n*= 22) identified social care as a significant inequality issue. Of those respondents who mentioned social care, the majority of respondents (86% *n*=19) mentioned inequality in relation to difficulties associated with accessing social care, or a perceived lack of support:

  Of those respondents who mentioned difficulty in terms of accessing social care or a perceived lack of support, specific groups were mentioned including the elderly and people with disabilities

  In addition, a few respondents mentioned a specific gap in support for carers.

  A couple of respondents mentioned perceived geographical gaps in terms of accessing health and social care

- **Health.** A small number of respondents (6% *n*=36) also identified health as a significant inequality issue. Of those respondents who mentioned heath as a significant inequality, several mentioned difficulties related to accessing health services and or a perceived lack of provision.

  Of those people who mentioned health as a significant inequality, a number of respondents made specific mention of a lack of support for mental health

- **Digital**. A small number of respondents (2%% *n*=10) identified digital skills as a significant inequality issue. Of those respondents who mentioned digital skills as a significant inequality, the majority mentioned difficulties related to accessing services on-line – including older people and younger people with additional learning needs/disabilities

  Finally, other identified areas of significant inequality within Swansea included access to green space and the natural environment, the city's infrastructure, parking and funding for public services.

Evidence: Key Findings from: *Is Wales 2023 ?*

Groups	Key Findings
Age, older people	- Poverty rates increased among people aged 65-74 from including fuel-poor households - Older adults are at greater risk of digital exclusion. - The employment rate for people over 65 has risen, but more likely to be in insecure work

	• significant gap in years of good health – 16.9 year difference for women and 13.4 year difference for men in most and least deprived areas • Older people over 65 are more likely to report that social care and support services had helped them
Age, children and young people	• the number of children looked after by Local Authorities in Wales has increased substantially • There are 8,200 young carers in Wales who are more likely to live in deprived areas • Although the proportion of NEET young people has fallen, 16 - 24 year olds have the highest rate of unemployment • Levels of poverty remain high amongst children and young people • The pandemic has had a negative impact on the mental health - 24% reporting significant issues • The number of children from Wales aged 10-17 in custody has fallen to the lowest on record.
Race	• Disparities between the educational attainment of different ethnic groups, most for Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT). • Higher attainment among ethnic minority compared to White British • Ethnic minority workers were more likely to be in insecure employment and work in a low paid occupation • Ethnic minority people more likely to experience homelessness and overcrowding • Ethnic minority groups in Wales are more likely to report experiences of discrimination and bullying in work • Evidence suggests that health and social care workers from ethnic minority groups face discrimination and prejudice. • The number of racially or religiously aggravated offences recorded by the Police has increased, however, the proportion of offences resulting in a charge has decreased • Black and ethnic minority people are more likely to have experienced sexual assault.
Groups	**Key Findings**
Disability	• The education attainment gap at foundation phase level between disabled and non-disabled children has widened. • Disabled adults are less likely to be employed than non-disabled adults. Although employment gaps are improving, earnings gaps are worsening • Disabled people have been significantly over-represented in deaths from COVID-19.

	• The proportion of disabled people reporting experiencing domestic abuse is around three times greater than others • Disabled people are also less likely to have confidence in the criminal justice system
Gender Reassignment	• Significant evidence gaps across all areas of life. • Evidence that those who identify as neither a boy or girl report having poorer mental health • Waiting times for the Welsh Gender Service are currently lower than others parts of UK, but higher WG targets • Health and Social Care providers lack the knowledge required to care for them, particularly as they get older. • Trans people in Wales are afraid of facing discrimination in the workplace and may hide their identity at work.
Sex (including marital status, pregnancy & maternity)	• more women have post-compulsory qualifications at level 4 or above, however the gender pay gap persists, • childcare needs and caring responsibilities continue to be a significant barrier in employment and education • women are still more likely to be unpaid carers • Single parent households are most likely to be in poverty, almost 90% of these households are headed by women. • women more likely to report poorer mental health outcomes, living with a lifelong disability or illness • women continue to be more likely to experience domestic abuse than men
	• Limited evidence in Wales focuses on religion or belief as a protected characteristic. • Less than half the Welsh population described themselves as Christian - 43.6%. • Religious minorities are less likely to be employed than those with no religious affiliation • Poverty rates have increased in Christian headed households • Biggest decline in reported good health between for religious minorities, compared to others
Groups	**Key Findings**
Sexual Orientation	• Gay and lesbian adults are more likely to be employed than heterosexual workers, • Heterosexual workers are more likely to work in construction, manufacturing, agriculture, energy and water industries than other sexual orientation groups.

	• Lesbian, gay and bisexual people are at risk of experiencing a range of discriminatory or bullying behaviours while at work and in education • Lesbian, gay and bisexual people are more at risk of hate crimes due to their sexual orientation. • Lesbian, gay and bisexual groups experience poorer physical and mental health than heterosexual adults. • Sexual orientation was the second largest motivating factor for police recorded hate crimes and is increasing

In addition to key findings for specific groups of people with protected characteristics, *Is Wales Fairer 2023 ?* also identified some key issues which affect multiple groups which are summarised below:

- poverty in Wales remains persistently high,
- gaps in education attainment persist (ie between children and young people with disabilities, those eligible for free school meals and Gypsy Roma Traveller children and young people),
- although the proportion of people with some protected characteristics within employment has increased, earning gaps have also increased, with a greater proportion of people with protected characteristics engaged in low and insecure employment,
- digital exclusion remains persistent for older people, disabled people, those in poverty and rural populations,
- some people with protected characteristics are more likely to report poorer mental health and illness than others,
- childcare and caring responsibilities continue to be a significant barrier to equality,
- some groups of people with protected characteristics are more likely to be in temporary accommodation and/or accommodation which is unsuitable for their needs,
- there has been an increase in the number of reported incidents of hate crime (against different groups of people with protected characteristics), however this has not resulted in a relative increase in the proportion of offences resulting in a charge.