



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

CLOSED CONSULTATION, DOCUMENT

Consultation on the strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028: proposed principles of approach and objectives

We are seeking to develop the Welsh Government's Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028.

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Ministerial foreword

Equality and Human Rights are central to the work of the Welsh Government and our vision for Wales. We believe in fair treatment of every person, especially those who face the greatest discrimination, disadvantage, and marginalisation. We are working towards a more equal Wales, a country which ensures access to services for all, tackles inequalities and poverty and delivers fairer outcomes for all our citizens.

These aims are not new, but they have never been more important than they are today. The gap between the richest and the poorest in our society continues to widen, and there are those who seek to promote their agendas of intolerance and hatred for other people. Years of austerity also risk undermining our shared values and dividing our communities.

In this context, we must continue to make every effort to affirm and demonstrate our commitment to equality and be vigilant to safeguard the human rights laws and international treaties, which protect every one of us. We will continue to consider equality impacts in the context of the Equality Act for those with protected characteristics, the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Socio-economic Duty.

We are clear that a fairer Wales must include everyone. That means supporting those groups and individuals who remain at greatest risk of discrimination and unfair treatment which in turn, leads to very unequal life outcomes. It is never enough to stand still.

As part of this review, Welsh Government internal and external equality stakeholder groups and partners from the public and third sectors have met to set the framework for this consultation, both through an online format and workshop. From this work, this consultation document containing a statement of our overall Aim for Wales, draft National Equality Objectives with Principles of

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Approach, have been produced.

This consultation and subsequent publication of our Strategic Equality Objectives for 2024 to 2028 in our Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028 is not the end of the journey. The 2024 to 2028 plan will be a living document that can be further developed over its 4 year period and will evolve over time with the development and refresh of specific plans and strategies. We will ensure the active voices of those with lived experience of facing discrimination and inequalities, partner organisations, stakeholders, and the wider public are included and heard, this is imperative to ensuring the progress we are committed to making towards eliminating inequality.

I encourage all those with an interest in promoting equality and human rights in Wales to engage with this consultation and guide us in. How we might change our way of working for the better, to help the next steps of our journey towards a fair, equitable and inclusive Wales underpinned by respect for human rights.

Jane Hutt MS

Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip, with portfolio responsibility for Equalities

Introduction

Why do we need a Strategic Equality Plan?

Having a Strategic Equality Plan is a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. The legislation was brought in with the purpose of enabling the better performance of the public sector equality duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and to ensure equality is at the heart of the work of Welsh Government. The legislation ensures that our work is focussed on eliminating inequality and the barriers that cause it, promoting

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equality and fostering good relations between people.

We make a Strategic Equality Plan in Welsh Government to ensure that policy makers are aware of the inequality people are experiencing and better understand the challenges people face, so that we make policies which remove the barriers for all people.

What is the Strategic Equality Plan and why are we consulting on it?

The Strategic Equality Plan sets out our longer-term aim and our equality objectives for the next 4 years, which will help us work to achieve this aim.

The Welsh Government already works collaboratively with partners and members of our equality stakeholder groups. We want to use this wider public consultation to develop together National Equality Objectives, and supporting Actions (the interventions or the things that we will do to meet our Objectives) over the next 4 years, and at the same time work to deliver our Long-term Aim for equality in Wales. We also welcome comments on our Principles of Approach set out in the document, which we think will help us to deliver against our long-term aim and National Equality Objectives.

We are looking forward to hearing voices from across Wales to help build our policies for now and into the future. We know change takes time and we are committed, through working with you, to making those changes and to delivering the positive impacts needed across Wales.

What are the legal frameworks?

Welsh Ministers' legal obligations to address inequality come from the following:

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- **The Equality Act 2010:**
 - protects people from unlawful discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It covers 9 protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex and Sexual orientation
 - disability: Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between disabled people and people who are not disabled involves considering, in particular, the need to take steps to take account of disabled persons' impairments.)
 - contains specific duties on public bodies such as the Public Sector Equality Duty
- **The Public Sector Equality Duty**
- The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, also known as the **Wales Specific Equality Duty**
- **The Socio-economic Duty**

Further details on the legal frameworks can be found at General Data Protection Regulations and annex a (Equalities Legislation).

The Socio-economic Duty

The Socio-economic Duty is set out in section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 and requires, that certain public authorities, when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise their functions, must have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage. The duty refers to aspects of life 'socio' (your life chances and where you live) and 'economic' (how much money you have for essential and non-essential items).

The Socio-economic Duty therefore seeks to improve the strategic decision-making of specified public bodies to better support those who are socio-economically disadvantaged in terms of income and/or status. It puts tackling

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inequality at the heart of decision-making and builds on the good work public bodies are already doing.

Inequality can further compound negative socio-economic factors. The Strategic Equality Plan will set out objectives and actions which will help to improve socio-economic outcomes.

Chapter 1: setting the scene in Wales

Equality now and for future generations

The **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** sets out a duty to carry out sustainable development with a view to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It contains 7 well-being goals and 5 ways of working. Further details can be found in Annex B: Welsh Specific Acts.

Our Strategic Equality Plan contributes to all of the well-being goals, and in particular supports progress towards:

- a more equal Wales: a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances)
- a Wales of cohesive communities: attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities
- a healthier Wales: a society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood

The 5 ways of working, long-term, prevention, involvement, collaboration and integration will guide our work in developing our Equality Objectives and the

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actions that will help ensure we fulfil them.

Together, the 7 well-being goals and 5 ways of working provided by the Act are designed to support and deliver a public service that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

To maximise our contribution to the well-being goals, we are focusing on areas where we can make the greatest impacts / improvement between 2024 to 2028.

Further details can be found in Annex B: Welsh Specific Acts.

“Strengthening and advancing equality and human rights in Wales” research and recommendations

In January 2020 we commissioned **research** to examine options to strengthen and advance equality and human rights taking into account the legal and policy framework in Wales. The report highlighted the strong inter-relationship between equality and human rights and a need to establish connections and clear objectives for action on equality.

In **response** to the Strengthening and Advancing Equality and Human Rights report we have identified 5 main areas of Welsh Government action, which are: preparatory legislative work, guidance, a review of the Public Sector Equality Duty, incorporation of human rights into impact assessment and raising awareness of human rights.

In collaboration with the Human Rights Advisory Group and the Legislative Options Working Group, we are carrying out preparatory work to fulfil our Programme for Government 2021 to 2026 commitment to incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women into Welsh law. Welsh

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Government continues to make progress in line with our legal obligations in relation to all international human rights.

Information setting out the range of international obligations is set out at the UK Government Web Portal [Human Rights: The UK's international human rights obligations](#).

The equality and socio economic landscape in Wales today

Since the publication of the [Strategic Equality plan and objectives: 2020 to 2024](#) there have been significant national and global developments that continue to impact on the lives of Welsh citizens.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the lives of people across the world, exacerbating inequalities and socio-economic disadvantage. All of our lives were impacted by the virus, but it disproportionately impacted some groups, including disabled people, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, and the poorest people in Wales, in their health status, socially and economically.

From early in 2020, the Welsh Government worked closely with partners and stakeholders in the public, private and third sectors to do all we could to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic developed and Wales entered lockdown, more frequent meetings took place with our Disability Equality forum, Wales Race forum, Refugees and Asylum Seekers taskforce, and the Faith Communities forum. Most of these meetings were chaired by Welsh Ministers, with senior officials, including the Chief and Deputy Chief Medical Officers, attending some meetings.

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As our response to COVID-19 evolved, we published (and continue to publish) advice, guidance and statistical reports on our website at [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#). The UK Public inquiry chaired by the Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett DBE commenced in July 2022. The Welsh Government is determined to ensure that the experiences of people in Wales during the pandemic will be properly and thoroughly reflected in the inquiry.

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC): is Wales Fairer? report

The EHRC report [Is Wales Fairer? \(2018\)](#) was published in October 2018 and provided substantial fresh evidence to drive and underpin the work of all policy makers and delivery agencies seeking to build a more equal Wales. This helps ensure our decision-making is robust and that our policies and services take account of peoples' needs and are accessible to all.

Is Wales Fairer? (2018) collected evidence from across 6 areas of life: education, health, living standards, justice and security, work and participation in politics and public life. Prospects for disabled people, some ethnic minority people, and children from poorer backgrounds had worsened in many areas of life. This inequality risks becoming entrenched for generations to come, creating a society where these groups are left behind in the journey towards a fair and equal country.

The Welsh Government is working to improve equality data and statistics to inform future policy development.

EHRC is preparing "Is Wales Fairer 2023" for publication. Its findings will be reflected in the development of the Welsh Government Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028, which will include the final versions of the draft Objectives set out as part of this consultation.

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Stakeholder groups

The Welsh Government has several well-established stakeholder groups through which we regularly engage with advocates and representative groups to discuss and take forward equality matters. These include:

- Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing
- The Disability Equality Forum
- The Disability Rights Taskforce
- The Wales Race Forum
- National Partnership Board
- Nation of Sanctuary Board
- The Faith Communities Forum
- The Gender Equality Forum
- The Period Dignity Round Table
- LGBTQ+ Advisory Group (being convened)
- The Human Rights Advisory Group (formerly the Strengthening and Advancing Equality and Human Rights Working Group)
- The Budget Advisory Group on Equality
- VAWDASV National Partnership Board

These stakeholder groups are chaired or attended by Ministers or a senior Welsh Government official and enable equality stakeholders to engage directly and regularly with the most senior levels of government on issues of concern to them.

Welsh Government strategic plans

Many Welsh Government plans and strategies have been published or updated since the last publication of the Strategic Equality Plan in 2020, which set out action to support a fair and equitable Wales: We do not propose to list them all

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here but included a few which are relevant to protected characteristic as a flavour of some of our work.

Age

Older People

Age friendly Wales: our strategy for an ageing society (October 2021), followed by the **delivery plan** in 2022, sets out the action we will take to reap the benefits of a growing number of older people in Wales as we rebuild our communities. This, in turn, will enable us to better support people living in challenging circumstances. To reflect the multi-dimensional nature of ageing and the intersectional nature of people's experiences, we have worked across government departments to address the range of factors that influence how we age, from our health and transport systems to the way we socialise, work and care for others. The strategy aims to unlock the potential of today's older people and tomorrow's ageing society.

Children and young people

Our **Children and young people's plan** published in 2022 sets out the Welsh Government's vision for setting out the part that Welsh Government can play in making Wales a wonderful place for children and young people to grow up, live and work, and where everyone feels valued.

The Welsh Government is also committed to the principles of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** and to having due regard to it in all of the decisions we make, in accordance with the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011.

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We believe all our children and young people have the right to:

- have the best start in life
- take part in and enjoy learning, and have the best education possible to expand their knowledge, develop their creativity and fulfil their potential
- enjoy healthy lifestyles and be protected from harm, abuse, neglect and discrimination
- be able to play and have fun
- be listened to and be treated with respect
- have a home and a community that is a nice place to grow up
- have enough financial and material support for what they need

Disability and disabled persons' rights

The Disability Rights Taskforce has been established to remove the barriers and inequalities experienced by disabled people, in Wales. The Taskforce works in co-production with people with lived experience and expertise, disabled people's organisations, Welsh Government policy leads and other interested bodies/organisations. The work is based on a common understanding of the social model of disability, human rights, lived experience and co-production, and is delivered by the following working groups:

- embedding and understanding of the Social Model of Disability (across Wales)
- access to services (including communications and technology)
- independent living: social care
- independent living: health and wellbeing
- travel
- employment and income
- affordable and accessible housing
- children and young people
- justice

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- well-being

The working groups include people with lived experience, policy officials and organisations that support disabled people.

Pregnancy and maternity

As set out in [Maternity Care in Wales a 5 year vision for the future 2019 to 2024](#), person-centred, safe and high-quality care for mothers and babies throughout pregnancy, birth and following birth can have a positive impact on the health and life chances of women and babies and on the healthy development of children throughout their life.

This can help to reduce the impact of inequalities which can have longer-term health consequences for families, securing the best possible outcomes for mothers, babies and communities. Improving maternity services supports healthy and happy families and the communities of the future.

The Welsh Government 'Maternity Care in Wales, a 5 year vision for the future 2019 to 2024' was published in 2019 with the objective of ensuring that pregnancy and childbirth are a safe and positive experience, and parents are supported to give their child the best start in life.

Race

As set out in our [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan](#), Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people contribute to a prosperous, healthier, more equal Wales with vibrant cultures and thriving languages.

Our Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, which was launched on Tuesday 7th June is built on the values of anti-racism and calls for zero-tolerance of all racial

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inequality.

We have identified a vision for an anti-racist nation where everyone is valued for who they are and the contribution they make. The Welsh Government is committed to creating an anti-racist nation by 2030.

As we progress into the second year of the Plan, work is continuing at pace to help us move from the rhetoric on racial equality to implementation of meaningful action.

We understand that a robust governance and accountability system, driven by the Welsh Government is essential to realising this vision.

The ArWAP governance structure comprises the External Accountability Group, with six external experts on anti-racism and eleven community representatives with lived experience. It is co-chaired by Professor Ogbonna and the Permanent Secretary and signals the high level of commitment from the Welsh Government to an anti-racist Wales.

The External Accountability Group works with our Internal Support and Challenge Group which brings together all policy areas for a cross-governmental approach to anti-racism.

Policy officials across Welsh Government have prioritised resources to deliver their individual actions.

The Anti-racist Wales Action Plan is part of the Welsh Government's Programme for Government and the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru.

As set out in our [Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan \(Nation of Sanctuary\)](#), refugees and asylum seekers often arrive in Wales following traumatic experiences in their countries of origin and on their journeys to the UK.

Welsh Government has provided support as set out in the plan published in

2019 to ensure that these individuals are supported to rebuild their lives and make a full contribution to Welsh society.

The Welsh Government is strongly committed to ensuring improvement of the situation for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

This is why the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP) has been co-produced with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, including those from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Lived experiences and voices have informed every goal and action and the improvement of outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities has been identified as a crucial, cross-cutting priority.

We support advocacy services for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, through TGP Cymru (Travelling Ahead). This work provides direct support to help Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families to access public services and for Travelling Ahead to advocate for them and help them to access support where needed.

Sex

Gender equality

Our [Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Plan 2020 to 2023](#) outlines the Welsh Government's vision to ensure a gender equal Wales, which means an equal sharing of power, resources, and influence for all women, men, and non-binary people. This work cuts across all parts of policy making in Wales.

The Plan implements the recommendations made in the Gender Equality Review (published as two reports, Deeds Not Words (Gender Equality Review Chwarae Teg) and the (Gender Equality a Roadmap for Wales) Roadmap. The reports set out short, medium, and long-term recommendations to achieve a gender equal Wales.

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Violence Against Women and girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)

Our **Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence: strategy 2022 to 2026** sets out actions to challenge and combat violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) and whilst we are proud of our record, there is more to be done.

Ending VAWDASV is a complex challenge. In tackling VAWDASV it is essential to recognise the intersectional impact of the abuse of power that underlies it. The effect of VAWDASV is layered through multiple aspects of discrimination which magnify the experience for survivors.

Our All-Wales Strategy published in 2022, is intended to define and lead action within all parts of the Welsh public sector. It is a strategy for both devolved and non-devolved public authorities and the specialist sector setting out priorities to create a collective sense of endeavour towards shared goals. It is a whole Government or systems approach with key interventions in our health, education and criminal justice functions. It is also a strategy for business and wider society to make the changes to norms, behaviours and cultures, which will lie at the root of achieving our ambitions.

We are making progress against the Strategy through our VAWDASV 'Blueprint' led by a National Partnership Board jointly chaired by the Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys. This partnership will ensure that our whole system is co-ordinated to provide the best support for survivors of abuse and prevent violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The partnership will continue to consider the intersectional impact of VAWDASV as it develops our collaborative approach.

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Sexual orientation

Our **LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales** states that the Welsh Government wants to make Wales the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe. It is an ambitious goal, but we believe we can support all LGBTQ+ people in Wales to live their fullest life: to be healthy, to be happy, and to feel safe.

Our aim, through this Plan, is to show our clear commitment to respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the human rights of all LGBTQ+ people in Wales aligned with the general principle of human rights set out by the **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR 2022a)**.

This plan acts as the framework for LGBTQ+ policy development across government and with our partners. It sets out the concrete steps we will take to strengthen equality for LGBTQ+ people, to challenge discrimination, and to create a society where LGBTQ+ people are safe to live and love authentically, openly and freely as themselves.

Further information can be found on the Welsh Government website.

- **[LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales: progress update](#)**
- **[subscribe to the LGBTQ+ Action Plan bulletin](#)**

The Socio-economic Duty

The **Socio-economic Duty** came into force in Wales on 31st March 2021. The Duty requires relevant public bodies, including Welsh Ministers, to give due regard to the need to reduce inequalities experienced as a result of Socio-economic disadvantage when taking strategic decisions.

By requiring relevant public bodies to make better decisions, ones which place

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consideration of inequalities of outcomes arising from socio-economic disadvantage at their heart, it will further help tackle poverty and inequality, deal with the current cost of living crisis and our continuing recovery from COVID-19, and allow us to move towards reconstruction of a fairer and more prosperous Wales. Early discussions with public body leaders have been positive; there are examples of public bodies integrating the Duty into planning and reporting frameworks, such as the intermediate team planning framework for health bodies.

For further information and resources on implementation of the Duty, please see:

- the [Socio-economic Duty](#) website page
- Welsh Government's [Implementing the Socio-economic Duty: A review of evidence on socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome](#)
- the [progress tracker](#) tool

Additional information can be found in Welsh Government annual report on equality which can be found on the Welsh Government website.

Community Cohesion

The Community Cohesion Programme operates across all 22 local authorities in Wales which, for the purposes of this programme, are divided into eight groups known as “Cohesion Regions”. The Cohesion teams deliver a range of activities, including:

- monitoring community tensions and working with partners to mitigate them
- supporting public bodies and other organisations with the provision of training on equality and inclusion related issues
- ensuring community cohesion issues are considered in the development of

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local authority plans and policies

- fostering good relations by developing events and projects to bring people from across different communities together

Following an independent review of the Community Cohesion Programme, the Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt MS, agreed that the Programme should continue to be funded until 2025 to 2026, to ensure that this valuable work can continue in Wales. The findings and recommendations of the independent review will help shape and inform our work in this area going forward.

Enabling participation in public life

In relation to action which supports National Equality Objective 5, the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill was introduced recently. It contains provisions to provide support for individuals seeking to stand for election from protected characteristic groups and socio-economic circumstances. This includes placing a duty on Welsh Ministers to establish and maintain a fund to support disabled candidates in the future.

The original intention was to expand the access to elected office fund from supporting disabled candidates to include candidates from other protected characteristic groups. The independent evaluation of the fund arrangements, together with discussion with stakeholders concluded this may not be the best way of supporting candidates from underrepresented groups. This requires a broader approach which will be supported through this legislation.

Welsh Government will work with stakeholders to identify those support schemes which can be put in place to make a positive difference.

Welsh Government's internal equality and diversity

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strategy

The Welsh Government's internal equality and diversity strategy sets out ambitious recruitment targets to improve the diversity of the workforce by 2026, which will ensure the organisation is representative of the people and communities it serves.

Welsh language

As set out in [Cymraeg 2050: a million Welsh speakers](#), the Welsh language is one of the treasures of Wales. It is part of what defines us as people and as a nation. Our ambition as Welsh Government is to see the number of people able to enjoy speaking and using Welsh reach a million by 2050. The Welsh Government published its [Cymraeg 2050: work programme 2021 to 2026](#) in 2021 and progress continues to be made in taking action toward meeting our aim.

Chapter 2: the Strategic Equality Plan proposed equality objectives and principles of approach

Overview of the proposal

Since the publication of the Strategic Equality Plan for 2020 to 2024, several distinct action plans and policies focussing on protected characteristics have been published, as detailed above. Each of these contain their own defined set of objectives and actions.

To avoid duplication and complexity, the Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028

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will not add to the objectives and actions already laid out in existing plans, where extensive work has already been carried out.

The Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028 instead will bring the plans together making connections between the plans and amplifying the intersectionality of people's lives and experiences.

The Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028 will act as a linked supporting framework, containing National Equality Objectives linked to actions detailed in existing plans and 3 principles of approach.

Our overall long-term aim is about strengthening and advancing equality and human rights in Wales. We expect it to remain relevant beyond the life of the Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028.

Deep-rooted and sometimes systemic issues adversely impact on those with protected characteristics. The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 require us to set out national equality objectives, providing an opportunity to work with stakeholders to resolve those issues.

The 3 principles of approach detail how the objectives will be applied within policy making across Welsh Government.

The distinct plans and policies each have different timescales. The Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028 will therefore be a living document which will:

- draw together and connect wider equalities work
- be able to be refreshed easily and quickly
- take account of emerging policy direction and equality impacting legislation, whether made in Wales or, more widely, across the UK

Our long-term aim, national equality objectives and principles of approach relate solely to the Welsh Government's own interventions. Other Public Sector organisations in Wales may also choose to develop their own tailored approach,

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reflecting those of Welsh Government, but taking account of regional or local context.

Developing this consultation: stakeholder group discussions and takeaways from initial engagement and responses

We engaged with equality stakeholders and partners through an initial discussion document setting out our principles of approach and an online focus group workshop on 20th July 2023 attended by around 30 people, mainly from the third sector.

The workshop discussed intersectionality, integrating the Socio-economic Duty (and the three proposed principles of approach).

In relation to the proposed principles of approach, a flavour of some of the responses is below:

“ Fully support the need to mainstream diversity and inclusion, as well as the need to embrace an intersectional approach. ”

“ These principles should serve as a fundamental pillar underpinning all of the government's work concerning communities and groups of people, as well as the services [offered]. ”

“ Overall, this seems to make sense as an overarching approach, limiting duplication and possible confusion. ”

“ Agree with the proposed change and the reasoning behind this the distinct

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equality action plans stand for themselves but there is a need for an overarching document that facilitates bringing them together and helps address cross-cutting themes such as mainstreaming, intersectionality and the implementation gap. ”

While there was broad positive support for the proposed approach, there were also questions and challenges. These will be explored further in this consultation and the emerging Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028.

Taking a thematic approach

To maximise the impact of our interventions and deliver better outcomes for the people of Wales we propose to frame our overall Long-term Aim and National Equality Objectives, within several thematic areas reflecting the 6 domains of the Equality and Human Rights Commission [Is Wales Fairer? \(2018\)](#), with the addition of Environment. These could evolve over the lifespan of the proposed Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028.

The domains are:

- education: lifelong learning for the people of Wales
- work: employment, apprenticeships, and volunteering)
- living standards: focusing on reducing and combatting poverty, but also creating and maintaining decent, inclusive and cohesive communities
- health: access to services and support and enabling personal responsibility
- participation and enablement: a Wales where every person is able to express their view, represent their views themselves or have their views represented, and where these views are heard by decision makers at the national and local level
- access to Justice and Personal Security: a safer Wales, where every person can find help and support when they need it

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- environment: ensuring a climate-conscious approach to Equality

One or more of the proposed National Equality Objectives should be linked to each of these thematic areas (ideally all).

Proposed long-term aim and National Equality Objectives

Developing a series of National Equality Objectives requires long-term thinking and action at both national and local levels to support their delivery. You will see we have set a long-term aim which we will work to achieve over the lifespan of the proposed Plan.

The current 2020 to 2024 Strategic Equality Plan has provided a springboard for the draft Long-term Aim and National Equality Objectives. It lays out a plan for the next 4 years to take action to alleviate the challenges and remove the barriers faced by many people and communities.

The Objectives aim to be both aspirational and deliverable and we recognise they will need to evolve as the equality landscape changes. We hope other Public Sector organisations in Wales will develop their own, tailored, local level objectives to match the national approach.

Your feedback on our draft National Equality Objectives will ensure we continue to make progress towards breaking down the barriers and inequalities faced by communities and people in Wales.

Long-term aim: to create a Wales based on equity, non-discrimination, and inclusion

Social Justice is at the heart of all Welsh Government work. We want a Wales where all people have equal access to human and civil rights, resources, and

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opportunities in all areas of life. We want a fair Wales that is free from discrimination, an inclusive Wales where all individuals feel valued, respected, and included.

National equality objective 1

We will create a Wales where everyone has opportunities to prosper in line with our organisational goal to reduce poverty.

To help achieve this, we will aim to:

- create multi and accessible pathways out of poverty
- mitigate the risks of more people falling into poverty
- improve outcomes for those most at risk and who live in low-income households using the levers available to the Welsh Government

National equality objective 2

We will create a Wales where everyone can be aware of their human rights, where they are protected, promoted, and underpin all public policy.

To help achieve this, we will aim to:

- identify and utilise all levers possible to protect, strengthen and advance equality and human rights in Wales
- work to ensure that people are aware of their rights and know where to find appropriate intersectional advice and support
- work to ensure that human rights considerations are embedded in all policy and strategic planning across Welsh Government and encourage a similar approach across our public sector partners

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National equality objective 3

We will create a Wales where everyone can be aware of and has equitable access to high quality public services.

To help achieve this, we will aim to:

- work to ensure that the lived experience, rights, wants and aspirations of service users, are at the heart of all Welsh public service design and delivery
- adopt an approach based on the measuring of the impacts and outcomes of the services experienced by the people of Wales
- address the policy implementation gap by improving delivery and removing the barriers which prevent people from accessing and benefitting from public services. This will include all Welsh public services
- work to ensure discriminatory attitudes are tackled in the public service system, including education and workplaces

National equality objective 4

We will take action to prevent discrimination, victimisation, harassment, abuse, hate crime and/or bullying against all people, including violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

To help achieve this, we will aim to:

- ensure that all support services are aware of how these issues affect our different communities, for instance disabled people are far more affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence
- ensure that all people have access to appropriate intersectional advice and support to help them live without fear, prejudice, and protect their health and wellbeing

- to help direct our work, we will create Welsh National Indicators regarding violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence

National equality objective 5

We will create a Wales where everybody is able to participate in the workplace, have access to public transport and see themselves as reflected in the leadership of our public services.

To help achieve this, we will aim to:

- identify areas where further action is needed to ensure greater diversity among elected representatives and identify and investigate mechanisms to redress inequality
- take steps to significantly increase the diversity of decision-makers in public life and public appointments
- seek to highlight the success of entrepreneurs from all communities
- build on the work undertaken through our pilot Access to Elected Office Fund by exploring what further steps can be taken to support disabled people standing for elected office
- explore how we can provide support for individuals seeking to stand for election from other protected characteristic groups and socio-economic circumstances

National equality objective 6

We will create a Wales with fair and equal opportunities to gain employment and for fair and equal treatment in the workplace.

To help achieve this, we will aim to:

- increase workplace diversity by being an exemplar employer, and attracting,

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retaining, and supporting a diverse staff group at all organisational levels, thus addressing the under-representation that exists within senior management

- take concrete steps to pursue pay parity at all levels within Welsh Government,
- remove all employment-based barriers that prevent staff from all backgrounds from reaching their potential

National equality objective 7

We will create an environmentally sustainable Wales with the capacity to both ensure our journey to net zero is fair and to respond to the inequitable impacts of climate change.

To help achieve this, we will aim to:

- continue to develop our understanding of the risks and challenges around the transition to net zero alongside those posed by our rapidly changing climate
- take positive action to ensure a fair transition to net zero and mitigate the impacts of climate change on all people
- work to support and build capacity in our villages, towns and cities across Wales, to empower communities to transition fairly, and adapt to impacts of climate change. recognising that those who are most disadvantaged are likely to experience its worst impacts
- plan the transition in a way that helps to reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage and reduce vulnerability and lessen the threats posed by the known climate change risks

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Proposed principles of approach

Three broad “Principles of Approach” will apply to all National Equality Objectives and supporting actions to drive forward the commitments in the distinct action plans and policies.

These Principles are how we propose to practicably implement the Equality Objectives across Welsh Government policy and interventions, working alongside policy colleagues and our stakeholder groups.

These principles of approach are:

Mainstreaming equality in the design and delivery of Welsh Government interventions and policy development

- Embedding Mainstreaming Equality across the organisation, including through the use of meaningful Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA). This aims to ensure that our policies and interventions meet the diverse needs of people across Wales, remove barriers and support people to flourish and reach their full potential.
- Supporting policy colleagues to ensure engagement with equality teams and stakeholders at the outset of policy development.

Delivering an intersectional approach to policy development and delivery

- Taking an intersectional approach to delivering the Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028 helps us to better understand how the different equalities plans and policies intersect and how they consider different protected

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characteristics. Further policy development will need to consider how interventions support individuals with multiple protected characteristics and respond to the Socio-economic Duty.

- Working in an intersectional framework is complex and will need continual review and engagement with stakeholders and partners; feedback on our proposed intersectional approach has to date been positive.

Addressing the gap between intention and delivery

- The Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028 should enable policy makers to demonstrate implementation and delivery of action. Policy makers are required to carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) to show stakeholders and service users how the intervention is clearly reflected in processes and actions, and improve access, participation, inclusion and quality of life for people and communities across Wales.
- To ensure Welsh Government strategies deliver actions with meaningful impacts for the people of Wales, policy design processes need to address the “implementation gap” (the gap between what a strategy or plan intends to deliver and the actual experiences of those waiting for the impact of actions to reach them).

Chapter 3: reviewing and refreshing the Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028 an evolving plan

Growing the plan

The Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028 will be a living document, updated and refreshed as needed.

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The impact assessment process will enable the Strategic Equality Plan team to engage with policy makers and ensure they are aware of any changes.

Adapting to the changing landscape

The equality and human rights arena can evolve rapidly. To ensure that policy is fit for purpose, the Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028 will strive to embed equality throughout government policy through its Objectives and Principles of Approach.

Informing policy makers on equality and socio-economic disadvantage and deepening their understanding of the intersectionality of equality areas, will help produce policy with the greatest potential impact. Using the EqlAs ensures better understanding of need and improved implementation by ensuring policy impacts are measurable.

Monitoring, evaluation and review: annual reporting mechanisms

By virtue of the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 public bodies have a duty to report annually on progress against their Equality Objectives. As the Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028 will contain oversight, updates and reference to the various other plans and interventions, it will be monitored and reviewed in line with the timeline of those plans. Inclusion of their reporting will be included in the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report as part of the duty to report on equality objectives.

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Consultation questions

Question 1

Do you agree with the Long-term Aim? Please explain your answer, suggesting any amendments.

Question 2

Do you agree with the proposed National Equality Objectives above? Please explain your answer, suggesting any amendments.

Question 3

Please tell us about any other issues relating to equality and community cohesion in Wales that you feel should be addressed?

Question 4

Do you believe having the proposed Principles of Approach strengthens the Strategic Equality Plan?

Question 5

If so, do you agree these are the right Principles of Approach? Please explain your answer, suggesting any amendments.

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Question 6

Do you believe the National Equality Objectives will help us fulfill the Socio-economic Duty? Please explain your answer.

Question 7

Do you believe the National Equality Objectives will help to promote and embed human rights in Wales. Please explain your answer.

Question 8

Do you have any further specific points you'd like to raise in relation to the Strategic Equality Plan?

How to respond

Submit your comments by **12 February 2024**, in any of the following ways:

- complete our [online form](#)
- download, complete our [response form](#) and email equalityandhumanrightsdivision@gov.wales
- download, complete our [response form](#) and post to:

Strategic Equality and Mainstreaming
Equality and Human Rights Division
Welsh Government
Cathays Park

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Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please **tell us**.

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Data Protection Officer

Data Protection Officer
Welsh Government
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E-mail: dataprotectionofficer@gov.wales

Information Commissioner's Office

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Telephone: 01625 545 745 or 0303 123 1113

Website: [Information Commissioner's Office](#)

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The Welsh Government will be data controller for any personal data you provide as part of your response to the consultation. Welsh Ministers have statutory powers they will rely on to process this personal data which will enable them to make informed decisions about how they exercise their public functions. Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about or planning future consultations. Where the Welsh Government undertakes further analysis of consultation responses then this work may be commissioned to be carried out by an accredited third party (e.g. a research organisation or a consultancy company). Any such work will only be undertaken under contract. Welsh Government's standard terms and conditions for such contracts set out strict requirements for the processing and safekeeping of personal data. In order to show that the consultation was carried out properly, the Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses

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in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

You should also be aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation. If your details are published as part of the consultation response then these published reports will be retained indefinitely. Any of your data held otherwise by Welsh Government will be kept for no more than three years.

Further information and related documents

Number: **WG48325**

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Annex a: the legal frameworks equalities legislation

The [Equality Act 2010](#) legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It covers 9 protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex and Sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 imposes the following two key duties on public bodies:

- Public Sector Equality Duty
- Socio-economic Duty

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The **Public Sector Equality Duty** is provided for under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It places a duty on public bodies when exercising their functions to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
- 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 Public Sector Equality Duty was developed to harmonise the previous equality duties regarding race, disability and gender equality, and to extend across all of the protected characteristics covered by the duty.

In Wales, certain public bodies are also subject to specific duties found in the **Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011**, sometimes known as the Wales Specific Equality Duties.

The aim of these duties is to enable the better performance of the Public Sector Equality Duty by requiring, for example, the publication of equality objectives, imposing specific engagement requirements, requiring progress reports and the collection of data and more.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission acts as the regulator to ensure compliance and delivery of actions that support performance of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Information on its regulatory role, responsibilities and powers of redress can be found on its website **Equality and Human Rights Commission**.

Public Sector Equality Duty organisations

Welsh Ministers routinely provide progress updates on the work being carried

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out to comply with Public Sector Equality Duty by Welsh public bodies and the Welsh Government sponsored bodies (WGSB) which receive funding provided by the Welsh Government to carry out their duties.

Building on the Act's distinctive Welsh Regulations, listed bodies must prepare and publish equality objectives every 4 years. In developing their equality objectives, authorities must involve people who represent the interests of people who share one or more of the protected characteristics and have an interest in the way that the authority carries out its functions.

The consultation and engagement within this document have the purpose of ensuring partners and stakeholders are an integral part of the drafting and monitoring of the Welsh Government's equality objectives, which will be captured in its Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028. The aim of its implementation is to meet the needs of the people of Wales.

The **Socio-economic Duty** is provided for in section 1 of the Equality Act 2010. It seeks to improve the decision-making of public bodies to better support those who are socio and economically disadvantaged. It puts tackling inequality at the heart of decision-making and builds on the good work public bodies are already doing. As well as tackling socio-economic based disadvantage, the Duty intersects all of the nine protected characteristics, enabling a more directed approach to tackling inequality.

The Socio-economic Duty is designed to ensure that those taking strategic decisions:

- take account of evidence and potential impact through consultation and engagement
- understand the views and needs of those impacted by the decision, particularly those who suffer socio-economic disadvantage
- welcome challenge and scrutiny
- drive a change in the way that decisions are made and the way that decision

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makers operate

More information on the Socio-economic Duty and the organisations subject to it, which are different to the list of organisations for the Public Sector Equality Duty, can be found at [Socio-economic Duty: an overview](#).

The Socio-economic Duty is an important factor in how we take forward the Objectives, Actions and Principles of Approach of the Strategic Equality Plan. Where you live and your lifestyle (socio) and how much money you have for essential items (economic) impact on your quality of life.

For people who also face barriers of inequality, socio-economic factors can be compounded. Working to reduce and remove those barriers through the Objectives, Actions and Principles of Approach set out in the Strategic Equality Plan can contribute to improving socio-economic outcomes.

Annex B: Relevant Wales Specific Acts

The Well-being of Future Generations Act

The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) sets out a duty to carry out sustainable development with a view to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It contains seven well-being goals to make Wales a prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal and globally responsible country with cohesive communities, a vibrant culture and a thriving Welsh language. These well-being goals are indivisible from each other and explain what is meant by the well-being of Wales.

Our Strategic Equality Plan aims to cut across all the well-being goals:

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A prosperous Wales

An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.

A resilient Wales

A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example, climate change).

A healthier Wales

A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.

A more equal Wales

A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances).

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A Wales of cohesive communities

Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.

A globally responsible Wales

A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.

The Act also requires public bodies to reflect the diversity of the population in applying the Sustainable Development principle. The principle is made up of five key ways of working. We must:

- look to the long term so that we do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs;
- take an integrated approach so that public bodies look at all the well-being goals in deciding on their priorities;
- involve a diversity of the population in the decisions that affect them;
- work with others in a collaborative way to find shared sustainable solutions; and
- understand the root causes of issues to prevent them from occurring and examining whether how we currently deploy our resources should change.

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The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023

The Act came into force in May 2023 and it makes provision about sustainable development in accordance with a principle of social partnership; about socially responsible public procurement; establishing a Social Partnership Council (SPC) for Wales; and for connected purposes.

It exists for the purposes of improving economic, environmental, social, and cultural well-being (including by improving public services) in Wales. The SPC may provide information and advice to the Welsh Ministers in relation to:

- the social partnership duties which this Act imposes on public bodies and the Welsh Ministers
- the pursuit of the “A prosperous Wales” well-being goal by public bodies when carrying out sustainable development under the WFGA 2015
- the functions conferred on contracting authorities and the Welsh Ministers (socially responsible public procurement)

References

- For information on protected characteristics, your rights and the Equality Act 2010: [Protected characteristics Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) and [Discrimination your rights](#).
- The language used in this section is Social Model of Disability language which is a key commitment of Welsh Government policy intervention for Disabled Persons [Written Statement: Welsh Government Response to the Locked Out: Liberating disabled people’s lives and rights in Wales beyond Covid-19 report \(2 July 2021\)](#).
- Strengthening and advancing equality and human rights in Wales, led by

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Swansea University, Bangor University, and Diverse Cymru with input from Young Wales.

- **How coronavirus has affected equality and human rights Equality and Human Rights Commission** “Welsh Parliament: ELGC Committee (2020) Into sharp relief: inequality and the pandemic”.
- OHCHR is the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, reference here is to International Human Rights Law and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- The origins of intersectionality lie with Kimberle Crenshaw in her 1989 theory and has continued to be developed and discussed in the subsequent 30 plus years: **Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics**, by Kimberle Crenshaw, published 1989.
- **Equality Impact Assessments: More than a Tick Box Exercise? Audit Wales**

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