



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives 2016–2020



Working Towards a Fairer Wales

November 2016

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.  
This document is also available in Welsh.

# Foreword from the Cabinet Secretary

Equality is central to the work of the Welsh Government and our vision for Wales. It has been four years since the publication of our first Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives and working towards equality is a long term endeavour.

In drafting our second four year Equality Plan, we have drawn on evidence and engaged with stakeholders and public and Third Sector organisations to develop our eight Equality Objectives, ensuring we continue to address the key priority areas. I am grateful to all respondents and participants in our engagement events, public consultation and focus groups.

Our stakeholders strongly supported retaining the core subject matter of the previous Equality Objectives as they address intergenerational challenges which require long-term focus and sustained action. The majority of the new, refreshed Objectives therefore refine the content of the previous Objective.

We have also developed two new Objectives which reflect feedback from our consultation and engagement. Firstly, consultation has highlighted how, in a difficult financial and social climate, negative views and stereotypes can become engrained in relation to particular people or groups and this can test the strength of our communities and how we live together. This has become even more evident following the EU referendum in June. The first new Objective (Objective 6), will therefore, focus on strengthening community cohesion, bringing the work undertaken to date in this area within the Equality Objectives.

The consultation also underlined the importance of recognising that people with certain protected characteristics are more likely to be living in poverty. Tackling poverty and reducing existing inequalities plays a fundamental role in taking Wales forward. This has led to a second new Objective (Objective 7) specifically focusing on socio-economic disadvantage based on certain protected characteristics.

Our Strategic Equality Plan contains not just the Equality Objectives themselves, but also the actions we are and will be taking to drive forward progress towards achieving them. It also includes information on our approach to Equality Impact Assessments, equality evidence, and how we will monitor the actions within each Objective.

Our plan builds upon the work we have already undertaken over the past four years and will help us to continue to mainstream equality and diversity across all Ministerial portfolios, tackling the areas of inequality which matter most to the people of Wales.

This plan is clearly aligned with our programme for Government, *Taking Wales Forward*. Within my portfolio, my priorities are well-being and prosperity. *Taking Wales Forward* outlines the Welsh Government's key priorities for delivering improvements. They are ambitious measures, aimed at making a difference for everyone, at every stage in their lives. Together we can build a Wales that is more confident, more equal, better skilled and more

resilient. This is a time of great opportunity for us to develop a more equal and cohesive Wales and fulfil the promise of the ground breaking Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Act is designed to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and provides us with an opportunity to advance equality and inclusion in a more integrated and strategic way. This plan reflects and is designed to contribute to those goals.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carl Sargeant".

**Carl Sargeant AM**

Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children

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# Introduction

Equality is enshrined in the legislation which underpins the Welsh Government and the National Assembly of Wales, the Government of Wales Acts 1998 and 2006. Equality and inclusion are also reflected within our guiding principles and make-up, together with sustainability and wellbeing, the foundation stones underpinning everything we do.

The five ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act – integration, collaboration, involvement, long-term thinking and prevention – are at the heart of our approach to equality and inclusion. Mainstreaming aims to build equality considerations into plans right from the start of policy making, rather than, leaving them to be a last minute consideration after key decisions have been taken.

The specific duty on undertaking Equality Impact Assessments has significantly supported mainstreaming, ensuring that equality impacts are considered at the start of the policy-making process, based on available information and evidence. Supporting Ministers with robust, evidence-based and reasoned advice is a fundamental requirement for the Welsh Government and a core skill for civil servants. Ensuring we identify potential impacts as part of any policy or legislative development is of vital importance.

The results of all impact assessments where the impact is significant are published alongside the relevant piece of work on the Welsh Government's website.

The Equality Objectives set out in this Plan apply across government departments, ensuring that equality and inclusion are not compartmentalised but are the responsibility of all policy makers. The Objectives embody the commitment of all Ministers to tackle barriers to equality and inclusion.

This Plan supersedes the Strategic Equality Plan 2012-2016.

# Equality Objectives 2016-2020

## Objective 1

- Put the needs, rights and contributions of people with protected characteristics at the heart of the design and delivery of all public services, in particular health and mental health services, education, housing, social services and transport. Specifically ensure support and tackle barriers to enable disabled people to enjoy their right to independent living and have voice, choice and control in their lives.

## Objective 2

- Ensure the adequate provision of high quality, accessible advice, information and advocacy services to enable people with protected characteristics to understand and exercise their rights and make informed choices.

## Objective 3

- Identify and reduce the causes of employment, skills and pay inequalities related to gender, ethnicity, age and disability including closing the attainment gaps in education and reducing the number of people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

## Objective 4

- Reduce the incidence of all forms of harassment and abuse, including (but not limited to) violence against women, hate crime, bullying, child abuse, domestic abuse, and abuse of older people.

## Objective 5

- Deliver a more diverse pool of decision-makers in public life and public appointments by identifying and addressing barriers to engagement and participation for people from diverse backgrounds.

## Objective 6

- Strengthen community cohesion by fostering good relations, inclusion, mutual respect and understanding within and between communities across Wales.

## Objective 7

- Reduce poverty, mitigate the impacts of poverty and improve living conditions for those groups most at risk of living in low income households, particularly disabled people, lone parents, certain ethnic minority groups, and families with disabled children.

## Objective 8

- Welsh Government will aim to be an exemplar in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda by 2020.

# Our Equality Journey

## Developing the Equality Objectives

The eight Equality Objectives will continue to help Welsh Government meet the Public Sector Equality Duty and ensure we are making progress in advancing equality and inclusion for all protected groups. The Equality Objectives also inform our stakeholders and the general public of the areas we are prioritising.

To review our Equality Objectives, we undertook a 12 week online consultation as well as holding consultation events. These engagement activities supported us in complying with the statutory duties to involve people with protected characteristics and thereby in reviewing and refreshing our Equality Objectives.

The Consultation Summary Report [www.gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/equality/160310-equality-objectives-2016-20-en-v1.pdf](http://www.gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/equality/160310-equality-objectives-2016-20-en-v1.pdf) gives an indication of the issues which were raised most frequently during the consultation, both in writing and at the engagement events and is available on the Welsh Government website.

Respondents overwhelmingly supported the retention of the core aims from the first set of Equality Objectives (2012-2016). We therefore refreshed those and also included a further two Objectives for 2016-2020, one with a focus on community cohesion and the other addressing the inequalities caused by poverty.

Our Equality Objectives [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/equality-diversity/equality-objectives/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/equality-diversity/equality-objectives/?lang=en) were published on 10 March 2016.

# Links with Key Policy Areas across Welsh Government

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

These foundations have been further strengthened with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en). The Act presents an important opportunity to embed equality and help tackle the intergenerational challenges Wales faces in a more joined up and integrated way, ensuring the Welsh public sector looks to the long term.

Provision for a more equal Wales was made in the Act through a specific well-being goal, which included reference to socio-economic inequalities. However, as the well-being goals are an integrated set, equality and inclusion should not be seen to connect solely with the more equal Wales goal but also as a vital component of the other well-being goals.

## Poverty and Inequality

There is a strong and close inter-relationship between poverty and the inequalities faced by people with characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010. As recognised in the Welsh Government's 2015 Child Poverty Strategy [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/child-poverty/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/child-poverty/?lang=en), groups with certain protected characteristics are much more at risk of living in a low income household and are also more at risk of poorer health, education and employment outcomes. We know we are unlikely to tackle poverty without a specific focus on reducing other inequalities. For example, as highlighted in the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in Wales 2015*, some 27% of people in a family with at least one disabled adult are in poverty, compared with 23% overall. The percentage of households living in poverty in Wales remains stubbornly high, with the most recent data for Wales showing that 29 percent of children, 17 percent of pensions and 22 percent of working age adults are living in low income households. It is critical we do more to support those with protected characteristics, particularly disabled people, lone parents (who are predominantly women) and certain Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups, to achieve better outcomes and progress in the labour market. This is also a key focus of the Welsh Government's new policy on employability. Evidence tells us that work to develop employability can play a key role in supporting many people to enter, remain and progress in employment – but it is critical we do more to support those who are distant from employment including some people with protected characteristics.

While all our Equality Objectives have a strong link with socio-economic disadvantage, our new Equality Objective to reduce poverty and mitigate the impacts of poverty (Objective 7), will help to ensure that Welsh Government continues to strengthen the way in which a close understanding of all equality issues is embedded in our thinking about poverty. The new objective will support us in designing effective interventions and ensuring that they

are delivered in ways that are tailored to take account of the varying needs and circumstances of people. Understanding and addressing the reasons people fall into poverty and remain there are important aspects in developing effective policies.

This Objective is further complemented by the well-being goal of 'a more equal Wales' which translates to a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background.

Reflecting what the evidence tells us about where we can have most impact, the Welsh Government's approach to tackling poverty includes a strong focus on reducing worklessness, increasing skills and employability, and reducing inequalities in health and education outcomes. The strategic Equality Objectives, particularly Objectives 2 and 3, will play an important role in supporting the tackling poverty agenda.

## Human Rights

The Welsh Government is committed to the promotion and advancement of human rights. Human rights were woven into the Government of Wales Act 2006, and they continue to influence our policies, legislation, and decisions. Equality is a core value of human rights, along with fairness, dignity and respect. These core values are clearly evident in the actions of the Strategic Equality Plan, demonstrating the close link being developed between equality and human rights. By achieving our Equality Objectives, we are also complying with our international human rights responsibilities, helping us to implement the rights contained in the United Nations Conventions and Covenants signed and ratified by the UK State party.

## United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Making sure children and young people have a say on issues which affect them is an important right. We have a duty to consider all the rights set out in the UNCRC when making any decision. The UNCRC is an international agreement that protects the human rights of children under the age of 18. The Welsh Government adopted the Convention as the basis for policy making for children and young people in Wales in 2004 which was enacted in domestic legislation through the 'Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure' 2011.

The Measure requires Ministers to publish a Children's Rights Scheme [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/rights/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/rights/?lang=en) which sets out the arrangements Ministers will have in place to have due regard to the UNCRC. Inequalities and poverty are key barriers to preventing children from accessing their rights.

## Welsh Language

The Equality Act 2010 covers discrimination because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. These categories are known in the Act as 'protected characteristics'. While language is not a protected characteristic, however, this does not make it any less important.

There are separate policy and legislative processes, including impact assessments, for ensuring the right to receive public services in the official languages of Wales. Welsh language rights are being taken forward through its own legislation, namely the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

Together, the equality and Welsh language policy agendas complement and inform one another.

## **Taking Wales Forward 2016-21**

*Taking Wales Forward* sets out how the Welsh Government will deliver more and better jobs through a stronger, fairer economy, improve and reform public services and build a united, connected and sustainable Wales through delivery of four cross-cutting strategies: *Prosperous and Secure, Ambitious and Learning, Healthy and Active and United and Connected*.

These set out in more detail the interdependent actions the Government will take to give everyone in Wales the opportunity to flourish at every stage of their lives.

This approach will enable Welsh Government to use all the levers available to us to have the greatest impact and deliver the promise of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. It will help ensure that public services are integrated, efficient and available when people need them.

### **Prosperous and Secure**

Prosperity brings security to individuals, families and communities. Our aim is better jobs, closer to home. We will provide the support that people need to access those jobs. Better schools and better skills have never been so important for our young people and the future of the economy. Through better education and providing skills for life we can help to break the cycle of disadvantage and inequality over the longer term.

The Welsh Government will also work with our partners to ensure that people have the right information to cope with the effects of welfare reform and take further our efforts to embed a united society with safe and secure communities, where everyone is respected and valued.

### **Healthy and Active**

Good health is vital to the creation of a prosperous, successful, sustainable Wales. The Government is committed to improving the health of everyone in Wales which will require action on many fronts not just in the traditional health sector.

## **Ambitious and Learning**

Wales's future prosperity and stability depends on the skills and values of the people of Wales. Education has a fundamental role to play in personal fulfilment, community development and wealth creation. Everyone deserves the opportunity to achieve their potential and we believe that education changes lives and drives economic growth. It will build the workforce that we need to deliver the public services that are at the heart of the Government's ambitions for Wales and help us to break the cycle of disadvantage and inequality over the longer term.

## **United and Connected**

The Welsh Government will continue to build a united and connected society, where everyone is respected and valued. The Welsh people will be supported by sustainable services which meet the needs of today while preparing to face the challenges of the future. The Government will continue to invest in infrastructure to boost the economy and communities of Wales and to connect all parts of Wales. It will support people and communities from birth through to old age. The Government is committed to delivering the reforms needed to ensure that our public services are resilient and meet future needs.

## **Delivery of the Equality Objectives**

The Equality Objectives will be delivered within the lifespan of the Strategic Equality Plan, and before the publication of the Equality Objectives 2020-2024.

Details and timeframes for delivery of the specific actions to deliver the Equality Objectives are sign-posted to other areas of the Welsh Government's website. Experience, lessons learned and feedback have told us that stakeholders prefer more strategic documents, allowing them to more easily access their particular areas of interest; delving for detail in the original plans, policies and programme on our website should they want it.

## **Is Wales Fairer? Report**

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) produced their statutory quinquennial report on progress on equality and human rights in Wales since 2010. They published the report in December 2015 and it is supported by a wealth of data and evidence. It shows good progress has been made in key areas in Wales, including a fall in homelessness, reduction in hostility towards lesbian, gay and bisexual people and an increase in the proportion of pupils achieving 5 GCSE's grades A\*-C.

However, it also found areas where there has been little or no progress. For example, in education significant inequalities remain between different groups of people. The report has also found young people are significantly worse off in many ways including income, employment, poverty and housing.

There is clear alignment between the evidence from 'Is Wales Fairer?' and the feedback from our consultation and engagement events. The key challenges are also reflected in our Equality Objectives.

# Action Plan

The following Plan sets out the high level actions Departments will take to deliver the Equality Objectives over the next four years. Further detail is available in underpinning documents via embedded links as feedback suggests that stakeholders prefer this approach.

## Objective 1

Put the needs, rights and contributions of people with protected characteristics at the heart of the design and delivery of all public services, in particular health and mental health services, education, housing, social services and transport. Specifically ensure support and tackle barriers to enable disabled people to enjoy their right to independent living and have voice, choice and control in their lives.

### Rationale

This Objective brings together two of the previous Welsh Government Objectives on independent living, and public service delivery. The new Objective covers all protected groups whilst continuing to recognise the specific needs and rights of disabled people.

Following feedback from our consultation, the Objective now has a stronger focus on rights and also explicitly includes those with mental health issues. The Objective has also been widened to include education and transport as key public services.

### Is Wales Fairer? Report

This Objective strongly links with the EHRC's challenge to improve access to mental health services. The Objective also links with improving access to care for older people alongside taking action to prevent abuse, neglect and ill-treatment of children and older people in hospitals and care homes.

### Actions

#### Care and Carers

1. The enhanced provision for carers right to care and support in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 [www.gov.wales/topics/health/socialcare/act/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/health/socialcare/act/?lang=en) will be reflected in the refreshed Carers Strategy.
2. Improve the quality of care and embodiment of rights for older people in residential care.

## Vulnerable groups

3. Implementation of the Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Strategy for Wales (Talk to me 2) action plan [www.gov.wales/topics/health/publications/health/reports/talk2/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/health/publications/health/reports/talk2/?lang=en) by Health Boards, Public Health Wales, Local Authorities and Third Sector with particular reference to those that have been defined as 'priority people' in the strategy.
4. Ensure equitable access and provision of mental health services through the implementation of the Together for Mental Health 2016-19 delivery plan [www.gov.wales/topics/health/nhswales/plans/mental-health/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/health/nhswales/plans/mental-health/?lang=en). The actions within the plan are set out across the life course to ensure focus is given to all age groups.
5. Publication of the revised Mental Health Act 1983 Code of Practice for Wales which contains specific reference to equality legislation and the equity of service provision.
6. Implement Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales' (CSSIW) new inspection framework [www.cssiw.org.uk/providingacareservice/our-inspections/?lang=en](http://www.cssiw.org.uk/providingacareservice/our-inspections/?lang=en) for regulated services for care, childcare including local authority social services. The new framework provides greater focus on peoples' rights and well-being.
7. Review and refresh the major health conditions plans, taking account of a number of factors including accessibility and equality.
8. Review and refresh the Eye Care Delivery plan [www.eyecare.wales.nhs.uk/document/221320](http://www.eyecare.wales.nhs.uk/document/221320) to re-prioritise where necessary so services meet people's needs.
9. Integrate more health and care by health boards and local authorities for people who are D/deaf or living with hearing loss through the development of an integrated Framework of action.
10. Development of an enhanced system for delivering adaptations to people's homes irrespective of age, disability and tenure.

## Education

11. Ensure children and young people aged 0-25 with additional learning needs are provided for within an inclusive education system, where needs are identified early and addressed quickly and where all learners are supported to reach their potential. We will do this by delivering our Additional Learning Needs Transformation Programme [www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/pupilsupport/additoinal-learning-needs-reform/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/pupilsupport/additoinal-learning-needs-reform/?lang=en), which will include the enactment of primary legislation and working with partners to improve the capability and capacity of the education workforce.

## Objective 2

Ensure the adequate provision of high quality, accessible advice, information and advocacy services to enable people with protected characteristics to understand and exercise their rights and make informed choices.

### Rationale

Appropriate and timely advice can make a big difference to the service user, helping to build people's resilience to make their own informed decisions and significantly improve their well-being.

There was strong support for continuing to prioritise this Objective, particularly in light of further spending cuts and changes to the UK welfare and legal aid systems. Analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), which was commissioned by the Welsh Government<sup>1</sup>, shows that disabled people, younger people and out-of-work lone parents (most of whom are female) are amongst those who will incur above average income losses as a result of the UK Government's tax and welfare reforms to be implemented over the next few years. This is on top of the income lost from the welfare cuts already implemented. In addition reforms to civil legal aid and other reforms affecting access to justice may pose a threat to equal protection and support.

The focus of this Objective will now be on promoting awareness of advice services and improving access to existing information and advice rather than increasing the amount of information available. This will enable people with protected characteristics to know their rights and the support available to them. The objective will also focus on supporting advice services to be more joined up, ensuring a more effective network of advice and information between providers.

This Objective is a crucial part of the Welsh Government's 2015 Child Poverty Strategy, which includes a specific focus on supporting families living in poverty to increase their household income, by providing access to support and advice, action to mitigate the impacts of welfare reform and action to address the poverty premium. Providing high quality advice is fundamental to the employability agenda and, in particular, ensuring individuals are able to remain in, and progress within, work once sustainable employment is found.

### Is Wales Fairer? Report

This Objective links with the EHRC challenge to increase access to justice. Although legal aid is non-devolved, the Objective will address this challenge through improving the accessibility and awareness of advice and information services.

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<sup>1</sup> Browne, J. (2015) *The impact of the UK Government's tax, welfare and minimum wage reforms in Wales. A report for the Welsh Government* <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/8053>

## Actions

### Advice

1. To produce and implement a Social Welfare Law Information and Advice Action Plan to ensure equitable access to good quality advice services.
2. To implement the Information and Advice Quality Framework for Wales [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/advice-services/information-advice-quality-framework/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/advice-services/information-advice-quality-framework/?lang=en) (IAQF Wales) offering a publicly recognisable Quality Mark for consumers.
3. To support the development of strategic and operational advice networks to plan and provide services by co-ordinating access to other advice, guidance and support services, refer on for support.

### Health and Social Care

4. Through the implementation of the *Together for Mental Health 2016-19* [www.gov.wales/topics/health/nhswales/plans/mental-health/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/health/nhswales/plans/mental-health/?lang=en) delivery plan we will enable people in Wales to have access to appropriate information and advice to promote mental well-being and to help them understand/manage their conditions.
5. We will ensure all people receiving treatment for their mental disorder in hospital and or those subject to the Mental Health Act 1983 have access to independent mental Health advocacy as prescribed by the Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010 and the Mental Health Act 1983 Code of Practice for Wales – revised 2016.
6. Deliver the substance misuse strategy ‘Working together to reduce harm’ [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/substancemisuse/publications/strategy0818/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/substancemisuse/publications/strategy0818/?lang=en) in order to enable people in Wales to have access to appropriate information, advice and treatment in order to minimise the harms associated with substance misuse.
7. Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) to develop and implement a framework for regulating and inspecting statutory advocacy services for vulnerable children and adults. The new model will be implemented in 2018/19 under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016.

### Tourism/Public Information

8. Work with partners to improve accessibility information for disabled visitors looking for places to stay or visit and to signpost tourism businesses to initiatives in order to improve their provision for disabled visitors.

## Children & Families

9. Work with local authorities to improve arrangements in respect of the provision of information and advice about additional learning needs and the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system, including through forthcoming ALN legislation.

## Digital Inclusion

10. Implement the Digital Inclusion Framework and Delivery Plan [www.gov.wales/topics/science-and-technology/digital/digital-inclusion/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/science-and-technology/digital/digital-inclusion/?lang=en) and deliver our commitment in '*Taking Wales Forward*' [www.gov.wales/docs/strategies/160920-taking-wales-forward-en.pdf](http://www.gov.wales/docs/strategies/160920-taking-wales-forward-en.pdf) to help 95% of people gain at least the basic digital skills needed for the 21st century by working with older people and disability organisations to support Digital Inclusion activities and help co-ordinate these across Wales.

11. We will work with the Information for People project to ensure accurate healthcare information is produced in a variety of formats to suit people's needs.

## Other

12. Develop the Financial Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan by December 2016.

## Objective 3

Identify and reduce the causes of employment, skills and pay inequalities related to gender, ethnicity, age and disability including closing the attainment gaps in education and reducing the number of people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

### Rationale

The new Objective brings together two of the previous Welsh Government Objectives on pay and employment differences; and tackling the number of young people who are NEET.

The Welsh Government will continue to use a cross-cutting approach to address the many factors related to employability and pay inequalities. This includes giving all children the best start in life, providing a quality education, challenging gender stereotyping, encouraging people with protected characteristics into roles where they are under-represented and reducing the number of young people classed as NEET, which is a key social justice priority for the Welsh Government.

This objective is fundamental to the aims of the Welsh Government's approach to tackling poverty and the 2015 Child Poverty Strategy for Wales, which includes a specific focus on improving outcomes in the early years of a child's life and increasing employability. It is vital for us to address the key barriers faced by those people who are economically inactive, as well as those already in employment to support them to achieve, maintain and progress towards sustainable employment.

### Is Wales Fairer? Report

This Objective reflects a number of the detailed challenges identified in '*Is Wales Fairer?*'.

These include closing attainment gaps by raising standards of children receiving Free School Meals (FSM), children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), looked after children and Gypsy and Traveller children. Attainment can also be affected by exclusion from school which particularly affects boys, certain ethnic minority groups and pupils with SEN.

The EHRC have also set the challenge to encourage fair recruitment, development and reward in employment. The EHRC have drawn attention to the need to increase the employment rates of young people, disabled people, ethnic minority people and Muslim people; and to close pay gaps for young people, ethnic minority people and women.

## Actions

### Employability

1. Production of a Welsh Government wide employability plan to underpin future approaches to delivery aimed at assisting young people and adults to gain, retrain, and progress within employment.
2. We will streamline our current employability offer into a single, all-age employability programme that will be more responsive and flexible to better meet the needs of unemployed people, under-employed people and employers, particularly disabled people.
3. Ensure a collective response to the UK Government's Green Paper on reducing the disability employment gap across the UK.
4. We will maximise the use of European Structural Fund investment to support fellows through the Sêr Cymru 2 Operation [www.gov.wales/topics/science-and-technology/science/growing-research-in-wales/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/science-and-technology/science/growing-research-in-wales/?lang=en) by providing up to 12 fellowships to re-capture talent after career breaks and actively develop their skills in public engagement through initiatives such as the STEMnet Ambassador scheme [www.stemnet.org.uk/favicon.ico](http://www.stemnet.org.uk/favicon.ico).
5. Ensure that Apprenticeships are accessible to all by focussing on the following:
  - Increasing participation of protected groups in apprenticeships.
  - Instigating a culture change on the programme to embrace diversity.
  - Work with key partners to ensure that apprenticeships associated with ICT Infrastructure delivered programmes address & support those with protected characteristics.

### Careers in Sectors and STEM Occupations

6. Sectors will promote opportunities for people by gender, race and disability through all conferences, newsletters and social media outlets.
7. Sectors will work with Anchor Companies, Regionally Important Companies and SMEs to develop links with local schools to deliver gender, race and disability focussed pre-employment events.
8. Sectors will work with external stakeholders to develop gender, race and disability actions.
9. Investigate the development of a Welsh version of 'Whitehall Industry Group' in Wales which replicates and improves the Gender, Ethic Minority and Disability leadership development.
10. All sectors will signpost businesses to the Agile Nation 2 programme [www.agilenation2.org.uk/](http://www.agilenation2.org.uk/) run by Chwarae Teg. This will be monitored and the results will be reported as part of the Objectives Reporting System.

# Objective 4

Reduce the incidence of all forms of harassment and abuse, including (but not limited to) violence against women, hate crime, bullying, child abuse, domestic abuse, and abuse of older people.

## Rationale

No-one should have to live their lives in fear of violence, abuse or victimisation. Over the last four years, the Welsh Government has made some progress on this Objective through the *Tackling Hate Crimes and Incidents: A Framework for Action* and the enactment of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015. The Welsh Government will continue to maintain the focus to embed the good practice already established within the last 4 years, which came through strongly in our engagement and consultation feedback.

The new Objective has been reworded to ensure it is inclusive of all protected characteristic groups. This Objective will also have an increased focus on increasing reporting and prevention.

## Is Wales Fairer? Report

The EHRC has set a key challenge linked to this Objective: to eliminate the incidence of violence, abuse and harassment particularly against women, disabled people, ethnic minority people, Muslim people and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Their report found whilst there has been no overall reduction in the violence, abuse and harassment experienced by some people, there has been an increase in reporting of incidents to the police and of conviction rates.

## Actions

### Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

1. Implementation of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015. [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/domesticabuse/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/domesticabuse/?lang=en)

### Hate Crime

2. Delivery of an Annual Delivery Plan through 'Tackling Hate Crimes and Incidents: Framework for Action' [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/equality-diversity/rightsequality/hate-crime/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/equality-diversity/rightsequality/hate-crime/?lang=en) across three objectives on prevention, supporting victims and improving multi-agency working

3. Improving and evolving hate crime victim services through Equality and Inclusion Funding [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/equality-diversity/equalities-inclusion-grant-2017-2020/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/equality-diversity/equalities-inclusion-grant-2017-2020/?lang=en) for a National Hate Crime Report and Support Centre [www.reportheate.victimsupport.org.uk/favicon.ico](http://www.reportheate.victimsupport.org.uk/favicon.ico).

4. As part of the Annual Delivery Plan for the Welsh Government's Tackling Hate Crime: A Framework for Action [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/equality-diversity/rightsequality/hate-crime/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/equality-diversity/rightsequality/hate-crime/?lang=en) we will explore the potential for all four Welsh Police Forces to monitor 'cyber' incidents on reported hate crimes and incidents. We will develop a guide to online hate crime for young people, practitioners and adults.

### **Bullying/Safeguarding in Education**

5. Work with key stakeholders to build on action taken to implement effective strategies to tackle bullying in schools. Update Respecting Others Guidance [www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/circulars/antibullying/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/circulars/antibullying/?lang=en) to take account of the Social Services and Well-being Act [www.gov.wales/topics/health/socialcare/act/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/health/socialcare/act/?lang=en), the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/domesticabuse/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/domesticabuse/?lang=en) and take into consideration the use of compatible IT platforms to improve accessibility for schools. Continue to raise awareness utilising events such as Anti-Bullying Week.

6. The updated "Keeping Learners Safe" [www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/keeping-learners-safe/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/keeping-learners-safe/?lang=en) takes account of the new Working Together [www.gov.wales/topics/health/publications/socialcare/circular/nafwc1207/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/health/publications/socialcare/circular/nafwc1207/?lang=en), and the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. This includes the continuation of the Child Sexual Exploitation training programme for education and other professionals and the creation and publication of Keeping Learners Safe learning and development e-learning modules for all teachers in Wales.

7. To set up a small expert group which can work with the Welsh Government to advise specifically on curriculum resources and relevant parts of the anti-bullying guidance which relate to LGBT and Healthy relationships.

### **Child Abuse**

8. Implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 – specifically in relation to Part 7 Safeguarding [www.gov.wales/topics/health/publications/socialcare/circular/nafwc1207/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/health/publications/socialcare/circular/nafwc1207/?lang=en).

### **Older People Abuse**

9. Implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 – specifically in relation to Part 7 Safeguarding [www.gov.wales/topics/health/publications/socialcare/strategies/older/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/health/publications/socialcare/strategies/older/?lang=en).

## Other

10. To make people in Wales aware of the continuing problem of slavery [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/anti-slavery/what-we-are-doing/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/anti-slavery/what-we-are-doing/?lang=en) and the need to take action to counter it and to co-ordinate the best possible support for survivors through the work of the Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group.

11. Contract conditions: contractors undertaking infrastructure projects will be required to sign up for the Considerate Constructor scheme and encourage “good neighbour” behaviour in all areas of the work including work force behaviour towards members of the public: particularly in relation to gender based harassment and race and disability respect.

# Objective 5

Deliver a more diverse pool of decision makers in public life and public appointments by identifying and addressing barriers to engagement and participation for people from diverse backgrounds.

## Rationale

When people from all walks of life are represented on public boards, it ensures diverse perspectives and more informed decision making in Wales, both locally and nationally.

There was very strong support for retaining this objective. Work over the last four years to drive the previous similar Objective forward has focused more on gender diversity than the other protected groups and this is reflected in the statistics.

From 1 April 2012 to 1 April 2015 women's representation on the boards of regulated advisory Welsh Government sponsored bodies has increased from 32% to 47% and on the boards of executive bodies from 35% to 38%.

Efforts to work towards gender balance need to be maintained to ensure this progress continues and is systematic. However, this Objective will also focus on extending the engagement with other groups significantly under-represented on public bodies.

It is these areas where further work and focus is required over the life of this Objective alongside maintaining the momentum on increasing gender diversity in public appointments.

## Is Wales Fairer? Report

There has been little increase in the diversity of people participating in civil, political and public life. The EHRC's challenge is to improve political and civil participation and increase diversity in public life. The essence of this challenge has been captured in the new Objective.

## Actions

### Public Appointments

1. Implementation of options following the Call for Evidence exercise [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/equality-diversity/under-represented-groups-call-for-evidence/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/equality-diversity/under-represented-groups-call-for-evidence/?lang=en), "Increasing the representation of women and other under-represented groups on Public Sector Boards".
2. Develop good practice guidelines on running an inclusive board.

3. We will also establish robust public appointments data. Data collection is essential if we are to effectively monitor the disparity between the number of men/women and other under-represented groups who apply, are shortlisted and eventually recruited/and reappointed to boards. While we have data on individuals finally appointed/reappointed we don't have data on the recruitment pipeline. Establishing this data will help us to identify and address particular barriers in the recruitment process. Otherwise, the aim to recruit more board members from under-represented groups may go unfulfilled.

4. Work with chairs, Equality and Prosperity Division and Public Appointments unit to understand the barriers to participation in applying for public appointments amongst people with protected characteristics. We will hold, within the 6 months following publication of this Plan, a seminar for Chairs of Public Sector Boards aimed at increasing diversity in public appointments in Wales.

### **Local Government – Elected Members**

5. We will work in collaboration with employers promoting awareness of the value to them of the skills and experience staff can acquire by serving as local government councillors. In this way we will seek to broaden the range of people who can in practice stand for election.

# Objective 6

Strengthen community cohesion by fostering good relations, inclusion, mutual respect and understanding within and between communities across Wales.

## Rationale

This is a new Objective and will focus on increasing awareness, understanding and engagement across protected groups particularly Gypsies and Travellers, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

Austerity and welfare reform continue to have a detrimental impact on our communities. In times of greater hardship, negative views and stereotypes can become entrenched in relation to particular people or groups. These negative stereotypes often have a disproportionate impact on more disadvantaged groups.

Whilst over the past four years there has been much positive community cohesion work, it has been delivered alongside the current Equality Objectives. There was overwhelming support from our stakeholders to bring the community cohesion work under the umbrella of the Equality Objectives.

Cohesive communities positively value and appreciate the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances and support those from different backgrounds to have similar life opportunities.

## Is Wales Fairer? Report

This Objective broadly links to eliminating the incidence of violence, abuse and harassment in the community. A community which is cohesive will not tolerate harassment or abuse of its members based on an individual's background or protected characteristic.

## Actions

1. Develop a revised 'Travelling to a Better Future: Framework for Action and Delivery Plan' [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/communitycohesion/gypsytravellers/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/communitycohesion/gypsytravellers/?lang=en). This will support social inclusion and equality of opportunity for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

2. Through a revised Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/communitycohesion/asylum-seekers-and-refugees/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/communitycohesion/asylum-seekers-and-refugees/?lang=en) we will identify and address areas of discrimination and improve access to public services for asylum seekers and refugees in Wales.

3. Support the implementation of the Syrian Resettlement Programme [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/communitycohesion/asylum-seekers-and-refugees/resettling-syrian-refugees/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/communitycohesion/asylum-seekers-and-refugees/resettling-syrian-refugees/?lang=en) across Wales to provide support to vulnerable refugees.
4. Through the Community Cohesion Plan [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/communitycohesion/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/communitycohesion/?lang=en) we aim to strengthen, mainstream and sustain both local and regional approaches, so that communities across Wales are safer, inclusive and resilient.
5. Fund Sport Wales to enhance engagement across communities and break down barriers to inclusion.
6. Sponsor Planning Aid Wales to work with Town and Community Councils to widen community engagement in the Planning system and the range of residents involved.
7. Continue engagement through the Race and Faith Forums to facilitate dialogue between the Welsh Government and a range of communities on any matters affecting economic, social and cultural life in Wales.
8. Narrow the economic, education/skills and health gaps between our most deprived and more affluent areas through three strategic objectives: Prosperous Communities, Learning Communities and Healthier Communities.
9. Pilot volunteer led community development partnerships for lonely and isolated older people (Compassionate Communities) including those with protected characteristics.
10. Work with Women in Agriculture through delivering a number of Women in Agriculture forums and develop specific women only Agrisgôp groups [www.businesswales.gov.wales/farmingconnect/posts/wales-women-agriculture-forum-2016](http://www.businesswales.gov.wales/farmingconnect/posts/wales-women-agriculture-forum-2016).
11. Use evidence and analysis to inform our approach to tackling poverty and improving the outcomes of low income households in Wales.
12. Through the 'Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020' [www.gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/cap/ruraldevelopment/wales-rural-development-programme-2014-2020/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/cap/ruraldevelopment/wales-rural-development-programme-2014-2020/?lang=en) we will encourage and support improved conditions for migrant workers and job security through up-skilling. We will also look to improve ICT literacy and transport access for disadvantaged groups living and working in rural Wales including ethnic minority groups.

# Objective 7

Reduce poverty, mitigate the impacts of poverty and improve living conditions for those groups most at risk of living in low income households, particularly disabled people, lone parents, certain ethnic minority groups, and families with disabled children.

## Rationale

This is a new Objective. Feedback from our consultation engagement indicated the Equality Objectives should more explicitly link with the Tackling Poverty Action Plan and the FG Act 2015, particularly the goal of a more equal Wales, which includes their socio-economic background and circumstances. While all the Objectives have a strong link with socio-economic disadvantage, as evidence shows people with certain protected characteristics are more likely to be living in poverty, this Objective explicitly focuses on poverty and inequality on the basis of protected characteristics.

## Is Wales Fairer? Report

This Objective captures the challenge of reducing poverty especially amongst children, disabled people and ethnic minority people; improving living conditions; and reducing homelessness especially for people fleeing domestic abuse and people with poor mental health or learning disabilities.

The report found there has been no reduction in inequality in living conditions. Poverty continues to affect some people disproportionately and whilst homelessness has declined, some groups of people are more likely to be homeless than others.

## Actions

### Employment

1. Develop and deliver an Employability Plan for Wales to support all working-age people into employment opportunities and to **gain and maintain sustainable employment**. This includes working with the Private Sector, alongside the DWP, to understand and minimise the barriers preventing people with protected characteristics from entering and progressing within sustained employment. We must use all the levers at our disposal to stimulate the creation of good quality job opportunities and to target recruitment in a way that promotes and incentivises employers to take on disabled and disadvantaged individuals.
2. We will streamline our current employability offer into a single, all-age employability programme that will be more responsive and flexible to better meet the needs of all working-age unemployed people, under-employed people and employers.

3. Continue to support those furthest from the labour markets, who face complex barriers to employment in our most deprived communities through our **Communities for Work** and **Lift** programmes. Though offering intensive mentoring and support, training and work experience opportunities to enable people to secure sustainable employment as a route out of poverty.

4. Support more than 4,000 people with health problems stay in work, through the new In-Work Support programme [www.gov.wales/topics/health/improvement/work/support/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/health/improvement/work/support/?lang=en). This will help to tackle poverty and social exclusion by preventing people falling out of work due to common health problems, which are often musculoskeletal and mental health-related. Secure funding support from the DWP's Work and Health Innovation Fund for a trial to commence from May 2017 to test an Individualised Placement Support (IPS) model to help people with Mental Health conditions who have been unemployed for less than 12 months into sustained employment.

### Valleys Taskforce

5. Deliver a Ministerial led Valleys Taskforce [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/taskforce-for-the-valleys/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/taskforce-for-the-valleys/?lang=en) to support focussed approaches to develop opportunities for integrated services, better jobs and skills, increased engagement and to maximise the benefits of existing structures and organisations.

### Housing

6. Improve the standard of homes through ensuring all social homes in Wales meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard [www.gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/housing-quality/welsh-standard/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/housing-quality/welsh-standard/?lang=en) by 2020 and assisting those who struggle to obtain market finance – The Home Improvement Loan.

7. Increase the supply of affordable homes through our ambitious target of delivering 20,000 affordable homes during this Government. This will include innovative methods such as:

- the Housing Finance Grant [www.gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/grants-and-funding/housing-finance-grant/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/grants-and-funding/housing-finance-grant/?lang=en). This initiative has a target of 1,000 new affordable homes and a second phase is being planned for 2017 for an additional 2,000 homes;
- increase the supply of affordable homes through the Social Housing Grant Programme, Housing Finance Grant 2 and Vibrant and Viable Places [www.gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/regeneration/vibrant-and-viable-places/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/regeneration/vibrant-and-viable-places/?lang=en);
- introduce a new Rent to Own scheme. This will be designed to support those who aspire to buy their own home but struggle to save a sizeable deposit;
- challenge the housing sector to build homes which are ambitious in terms of the design, quality, location and energy efficiency of the homes we deliver.

## Child Poverty

8. Continue to work across the Welsh Government to deliver the objectives set out in the 2015 Child Poverty Strategy.

9. Improve primary prevention of childhood illness, disability, neglect and abuse, through improving antenatal care, breastfeeding, child development and immunisations through Healthy Child Wales [www.gov.wales/topics/health/publications/health/reports/healthy-child/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/health/publications/health/reports/healthy-child/?lang=en).

10. Continue to improve health and well-being amongst children, young people and families through a focus on reducing the incidence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and by seeking to prevent them where we can. We will aim to increase the resilience of children and young people to avoid the damaging behavioural and physiological changes that occur in response to chronic stress and thus help to improve their well-being and their economic prosperity in later life.

11. Raise the academic attainment of learners from deprived backgrounds through implementation of strategies set out in *Rewriting the Future* [www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/deprivation/rewriting-the-future-schools/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/deprivation/rewriting-the-future-schools/?lang=en) and its revision, (the Welsh Government's overarching policy for improving the outcomes of pupils from deprived backgrounds) and an extended Pupil Deprivation Grant.

## Fuel Poverty

12. Tackle fuel poverty [www.gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/energy/fuelpoverty/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/energy/fuelpoverty/?lang=en) by providing all households with access to advice and support to help them reduce their energy bills. For low income households living in the most energy inefficient homes, and those living in the most deprived areas of Wales, we will continue to provide free home energy efficiency measures, maximising our investment by leveraging in funding from other sources, such as the Energy Company Obligation.

## Tackling Poverty within Wales

13. Use all available levers to increase employability and improve outcomes in the early years. These priorities reflect where the evidence tells us we can have most impact on improving the outcomes of low income households.

14. Lead on mitigating actions to support those most affected by the UK Government's welfare reforms.

15. Ensure our approach to tackling poverty amongst those with protected characteristics is informed by a strong evidence and research base and an ongoing analyses of relevant data sets (such as the National Survey for Wales) and ongoing analysis of the impacts of welfare reform.

16. *Fusion: Tackling Poverty through Culture* [www.gov.wales/topics/cultureandsport/tackling-poverty-through-culture/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/cultureandsport/tackling-poverty-through-culture/?lang=en) programme – work with Pioneer Areas in disadvantaged areas to provide high quality cultural engagement opportunities, expanding horizons, and improving life chances through supporting skills and employability.

### **Financial Assistance**

17. Provide support through the Discretionary Assistance Fund [www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/debt/discretionary-assistance-fund/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/debt/discretionary-assistance-fund/?lang=en), for those (most vulnerable) people who are suffering an emergency situation or need support to help them to remain in the community. This support can include people with protected characteristics but is not limited to these groups.

18. Continued support to Credit Unions to enable them to provide services to financially excluded individuals.

19. Welsh Government will encourage devolved public sector employers to consider implementing the Living Wage Foundation Living Wage.

20. Provide support through Broadband Voucher Schemes, for individuals & communities that may have protected characteristic qualities, to access ICT Infrastructure.

21. The Rural Development Programme [www.gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/cap/ruraldevelopment/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/cap/ruraldevelopment/?lang=en) will provide training workshops and produce a guidance document on undertaking evaluations at a local level. These evaluations will improve equality evidence collections and develop better outcomes to protected characteristic groups.

### **Non Guaranteed Hours Arrangements/Zero Hour Contracts**

22. Non Guaranteed Hour arrangements, often referred to as zero hour contracts can provide individuals with the flexibility to undertake additional employment, education or provide care for a dependent but that flexibility should not undermine the way an employee is treated. Welsh Government will publish the Public Service Staff Commission's Principles and Guidance on the appropriate use of non-guaranteed hours arrangements in devolved public services in Wales to ensure those employed on non guaranteed hours are treated equitably.

# Objective 8

Welsh Government will aim to be an exemplar in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda by 2020.

## Rationale

This is an internal Objective for the Welsh Government, which demonstrates the commitment to ensure the Welsh Government Civil Service provides a fair and inclusive environment, where everyone has the opportunity to be themselves and fulfil their potential.

## Is Wales Fairer? Report

In line with the challenge to encourage fair recruitment, development and reward in employment, the Welsh Government aims to be a good employer, promoting equality of opportunity, valuing individualism and diversity.

## Actions

1. To take account of user needs for the re-procurement programme when new ICT services are implemented in 2019 with needs of all users (including assisted users) being owned centrally.
2. Development of the Flexible Working Project will support flexible working practices across the organisation, providing opportunities for those with caring responsibilities and those with assisted needs who need reasonable adjustments.
3. The Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group will develop and agree a three year action plan setting out how the organisation will meet this objective. The Plan will be regularly monitored by the Group.

## About Welsh Government

The Welsh Government is elected by the people of Wales to carry out a programme of government. This involves making decisions and ensuring delivery on the areas devolved to us which include health, education, housing and the environment. The Welsh Government, now in its fifth Assembly, is continuously working to improve the lives of people in Wales and make our nation a better place in which to live and work.

We do this by:

- developing and implementing policies;
- setting up and directing delivery and governance in these key areas, such as local government and the NHS in Wales;
- proposing Welsh laws (Assembly Bills) and making subordinate legislation (e.g. regulations and statutory guidance).

The Welsh Government consists of:

- The First Minister
- Cabinet Secretaries
- Ministers
- The Counsel General.

It is supported by civil servants, based in offices throughout Wales. The Permanent Secretary is the head of the Welsh Government Civil Service, which is divided into 4 groups: Office of the First Minister and Cabinet Office; the Health and Social Services Group; the Economy, Skills and Natural Resources Group; and the Education and Public Services Group.

The Permanent Secretary is supported by 2 Deputy Permanent Secretaries, the Director General for Health/NHS Wales Chief Executive and other members of the Senior Civil Service.

# Evidence Base and General Equality Information

## Review of Evidence on Inequality in Wales and Gaps in evidence

We will publish an updated *Review of the Evidence on Inequality in Wales* in early 2017. This review will bring together the available evidence held by the Welsh Government in relation to the different protected groups in a number of key policy areas, such as Housing, Education and Employment. The review also draws on wider available evidence, including from the EHRC's *Is Wales Fairer?* [www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/wales-fairer-report](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/wales-fairer-report) (2015).

There continue to be gaps in evidence around particular characteristics where data sets are not available or are too small to allow meaningful conclusions to be drawn. The above review draws on newly available data that have been aggregated over multiple years to provide robust estimates for some groups. It also draws on smaller studies in some areas for groups where large-scale data are not available.

We will continue to work with other public and Third Sector organisations to work towards filling these gaps where possible.

## Knowledge and Analytical Services Evidence Plan

The Welsh Government's Knowledge and Analytical Services' (KAS) annual Evidence Plan [www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research/about/user-engagement/plans-practices/knowledge-analytical-services-evidence-plan/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research/about/user-engagement/plans-practices/knowledge-analytical-services-evidence-plan/?lang=en) provides an overview of the activities being undertaken by all of the Welsh Government's central analytical resources. In particular, it outlines a programme of planned statistical and research outputs as well as detail on key cross-cutting analytical priorities and improvement plans.

Upon publication we encourage feedback on the Evidence plan every year. The plan is a live document and we take feedback from all of our consultation mechanisms into account as part of our planning and prioritisation.

## User Engagement Strategy

Meeting the needs of all users of statistics is a key part of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Our User Engagement Strategy [www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research/about/user-engagement/plans-practices/current-practices/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research/about/user-engagement/plans-practices/current-practices/?lang=en) describes our approach for consulting with and informing users. It also provides examples of specific user engagement actions for the year ahead.

## StatsWales

StatsWales [www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/](http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/) is the Welsh Government's bilingual, free-to-use online repository for detailed statistical data for Wales. StatsWales allows users to view and manipulate datasets on-screen, including the ability to produce charts. Data can be downloaded in a variety of formats and can be saved and shared. The system covers nearly 1,000 datasets, including key information on Wales' population, economy, government spending and performance as well as the environment, education, transport and health.

## National Indicators

Ministers published 46 National Indicators for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. As set out in the *National indicators for Wales: Technical document* [www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research/how-do-you-measure-nations-progress-national-indicators/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research/how-do-you-measure-nations-progress-national-indicators/?lang=en) (2016), 25 of the 46 indicators will be disaggregated by protected characteristic. The document notes, however, that where this is the case 'not all data will be available for each of the protected characteristics. The indicators will be analysed where data are robust and appropriate to be used in that context.'

The indicators that will not be disaggregated include several measures that are not person-based, such as 'Levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) pollution in the air'.

## SEP Evaluation

The previous Strategic Equality Plan (2012-16) was the first to be developed by the Welsh Government under the Equality Act 2010. It came into effect in April 2012 and set out goals and actions under the Equality Objectives for the following four year period. Following the completion of this period in March 2016, we commenced an evaluation of the plan. The purpose of the evaluation was to review the evidence available on the progress made under the Objectives in this first period and consider any lessons learned for the development of the new plan.

## Identifying and Publishing Relevant Information

In March 2016 we published our first Open Data Plan. This sets out our commitments to further develop our publication and use of data, including improvements to the existing openness of the data on StatsWales. This will work towards ensuring that the data we publish are easy to access and re-use – both for users outside the Welsh Government, as well as for ourselves to better inform policy development.

## Procurement

The Welsh Government's Wales Procurement Policy Statement [www.gov.wales/topics/improving-services/better/vfm/publications/procurement-policy-statement/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/topics/improving-services/better/vfm/publications/procurement-policy-statement/?lang=en) was refreshed in 2015 and consists of ten key principles which all Welsh public sector organisations should adhere to when delivering their procurement activity.

For the first time in Wales, a formal definition of Value for Money is provided as "the optimum combination of whole-of-life costs in terms of not only generating efficiency savings and good quality outcomes for the organisation, but also benefit to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment."

Embedded within the Policy Statement are a number of key drivers which influence the delivery of equality considerations including:

- ensuring Community Benefits are built into contracts;
- simplifying the procurement process and lowering barriers for suppliers;
- advertising contract opportunities through the Sell2wales website;
- completing the Sustainability Risk Assessment tool.

Through compliance with the PSED in procurement policy, the Welsh Government can ensure the goods and services procured are fit for purpose and thus ensure they meet the needs of our diverse citizens and communities. The Welsh Government has been at the forefront of the delivery of the procurement policies for the Welsh public sector which has driven equality forward and will continue to do so over the next four years.

## Recruitment and Employment Information

The Welsh Government promotes knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 to its employees through a training programme which ensures all new entrants receive equality training in addition to bespoke training on issues including equality impact assessments, disability and dignity at work. The training on Equalities is currently being reviewed. All the Senior Civil Service are required to complete Unconscious Bias training and other employees are also required to have undertaken this training before applying for promotion or if they are going to be a recruitment panel member.

## Welsh Government as an Employer

We are required to publish our employment information each year under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. This employment information is published each year in our annual Employer Equality Report. The Report contains data on our workforce by protected characteristic in areas that include resourcing, training, leadership and reward and recognition. The Welsh Government will continue to undertake regular equal pay audits and publish headline equal pay information as

part of its annual Employer Equality Report. The 2014-2015 report can be found at [www.gov.wales/about/civilservice/how-we-work/facts-figures/our-role-as-an-employer/welshgovernmentemployerequality/report-14-15/?lang=en](http://www.gov.wales/about/civilservice/how-we-work/facts-figures/our-role-as-an-employer/welshgovernmentemployerequality/report-14-15/?lang=en).

Achieving a more diverse workforce which is more representative of the communities we serve is a key commitment of the Welsh Government's Board, which has agreed targets which focus on the numbers of women in the senior civil service and increasing the number of employees with the protected characteristics of race and disability.

The Welsh Government Board has appointed a Board Champion who provides quarterly updates on equality, diversity and inclusion. Four deputy directors, representing each Group in Welsh Government, have a role as Diversity Champions. Diversity networks ensure employees are supported and have an opportunity to influence policies. The Board's Champion on Equality chairs a Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group which includes diversity champions and the chairs of the Welsh Government's diversity networks. The Steering Group will oversee the implementation of the Action Plan referred to under Objective 8.

## **Monitoring**

### **Indicators**

It is critical we monitor the Welsh Government's Equality Objectives using a set of strong and relevant population indicators, many of which will be directly linked to the indicators underpinning the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act. Alongside this focus on key indicators, we will also be ensuring individual Welsh Government departments are measuring the performance of specific programmes and key actions on an ongoing basis – and that key performance measures are in place.

### **Monitoring and reporting**

The actions which are driving forward the achievement of the Objectives will be monitored internally on a six monthly basis and challenged where necessary to ensure year on year progress is being made. Progress will be reported to the Strategic Equality Plan Board, which comprises of Welsh Government officials, public sector and Third Sector equality stakeholders and the Equality and Human Rights Commission Wales.

Our annual report on equality will provide stakeholders and other interested parties with a transparent summary on the progress Welsh Government has made over the previous financial year on its Equality Objectives as well as an overview of the steps taken to comply with the specific equality duties featured in this plan. There will also be an opportunity at this stage for Departments to update the Plan with any new work since the drafting of this document.

The Equality Objectives will be reviewed in line with the statutory requirement by 2020.

# Equality Impact Assessment

Tackling poverty and inequality is central to the Welsh Governments' Programme for Government, *Taking Wales Forward*. [www.gov.wales/docs/strategies/160920-taking-wales-forward-en.pdf](http://www.gov.wales/docs/strategies/160920-taking-wales-forward-en.pdf)

The Equality Act 2010 places a General Equality Duty on Welsh public authorities to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, as well as to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Specific Duties, as set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 are designed to assist authorities to comply with their General Duty, and includes the requirement to assess potential impacts on equality in our decision making. The Welsh Government is also bound by the Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights.

Further underpinning the Welsh Government's commitment to equality is the duty under Section 77 of the Government of Wales Act 2006, to have arrangements to ensure that its functions are exercised with due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people.

Our organisation is required to have arrangements for carrying out Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) across all of the protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Our systematic approach to EIA ensures that our policies and practices better meet the needs of the people of Wales. EIA is a mandatory part of the policy making process. It should start as early as possible.

An integrated approach to assessing impact is critical, not least because many of the issues around equality, poverty and children's rights are inter-related. Work has been taken forward to ensure that the Welsh Government's Equality Objectives are fundamentally aligned with the Welsh Government's approach to tackling poverty. When assessing equality and sustainability impacts, it is critical to ensure there is specific focus on those groups which are most at risk of poorer outcomes. This includes disabled people, certain minority ethnic groups and young people.

In order to improve the impact assessment processes within the Welsh Government the Permanent Secretary engaged with staff to identify ways to improve advice to Ministers and reduce the complexity of internal processes. Impact Assessment (IA) was an area where increasing complexity militated against effective policy advice. The First Minister asked the Public Policy Institute for Wales (PPIW) to support the Welsh Government in addressing this.

The purpose of the review was to improve the advice provided to Ministers, and ensure that IAs, including EIAs, add real value to policymaking. If we can improve these assessments, there will be opportunities for wider application to public services, at a time when more cost-effective use of resources has never been more important.

IAs provide a structured understanding of the consequences of governmental actions and interventions, applicable to all the principal governmental intervention instruments. The evidence shows that structural, cultural and contextual factors interact to create the IA 'system' that shapes both the complexity and the value that IAs contribute. Improving IAs requires a full understanding of the 'problem'.

Within Welsh Government, the use of EIAs is central to assessing the impact of its decisions and policies on the people of Wales, as demonstrated by its commitment to assess the impact of its spending decisions. The Welsh Government has been progressively moving toward publishing an Integrated Impact Assessment of its Draft Budget. The Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment considers the impact of spending decisions on equality, socio-economic disadvantage, children's rights and Welsh language, which contribute to the wider understanding of the sustainability of decisions making. This integrated approach is in line with the principles set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.