



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Equality Objectives 2016–2020



Working Towards a Fairer Wales

March 2016

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

Ministerial Foreword

Equality and inclusion have always been at the heart of the Welsh Government and our Specific Equality Duties have provided the momentum for driving equality and inclusion further forward.

It has been four years since our first Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives were published, under these duties, to address long standing, engrained and often inter-generational inequality.

I am pleased the past four years have involved some truly ground breaking and progressive ways of tackling inequality through our policies, funding streams and legislation.

Under our Specific Equality Duties, we are required to review and refresh our Equality Objectives every four years, to ensure we are continuing to address the areas of greatest inequalities.

To do this, we engaged widely with stakeholders, Public and Third Sector organisations to gather views and evidence on the current priority areas of inequality for protected groups.

Feedback from our consultation and engagement strongly supported retaining the subject matter of our existing Equality Objectives as they address long term intergenerational challenges which will take time to fully resolve.

Based on this feedback and the valuable evidence in the EHRC's *Is Wales Fairer?* Report, we developed our eight new Equality Objectives.

The majority of the revised Objectives refine the content of the current Objectives and will maintain momentum and build on our progress.

We have also introduced two new Equality Objectives. Our work on community cohesion will now be brought under the umbrella of the Equality Objectives, which reflects the importance of supporting communities to be cohesive, strong and supportive of its members.

Whilst all the Objectives have a strong link with socio-economic disadvantage, we now have a new Objective which will explicitly focus on tackling poverty and inequality based on protected characteristics.

I believe our Equality Objectives for the next four years will address the key equality challenges which matter most to the people of Wales, will help us to deliver on the Well-being Goals and will continue to demonstrate our cross Governmental commitment to tackling inequality.

This strategic and long term focus on tackling inequality will ensure we continue to make significant strides towards our vision of a fairer Wales in 2016-2020.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lesley Griffiths".

Lesley Griffiths AM

Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty

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Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 created the Public Sector Equality Duty. In summary it places a duty on public bodies to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Welsh Government was the first part of Great Britain to regulate to create specific duties under the 2010 Equality Act. These specific equality duties laid a further foundation for taking equality forward in Wales. Under the duties we published our first four year Equality Objectives in April 2012 and have reviewed and refreshed our Equality Objectives for 2016-20.

The purpose of the Equality Objectives is to strengthen the Welsh Government's performance of the public sector equality duty and ensure the Welsh Government is making year on year progress in advancing equality and inclusion for all protected groups. The Equality Objectives also inform our stakeholders and the general public, the areas of inequality which the Welsh Government is prioritising as areas for action.

The new Objectives will build on the work we have already undertaken over the last four years and help us to continue to mainstream equality and diversity into all of our work, tackling the areas of inequality which matter most to the people of Wales. This includes looking at how we do things internally in the Welsh Government in our role as an employer.

The Equality Objectives have been developed following in-depth engagement and consultation with protected groups across Wales. The engagement provided stakeholders with the opportunity to influence the Equality Objectives and the way they were drafted.

Feedback from our consultation indicated the Equality Objectives should clearly link with the Tackling Poverty Action Plan and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

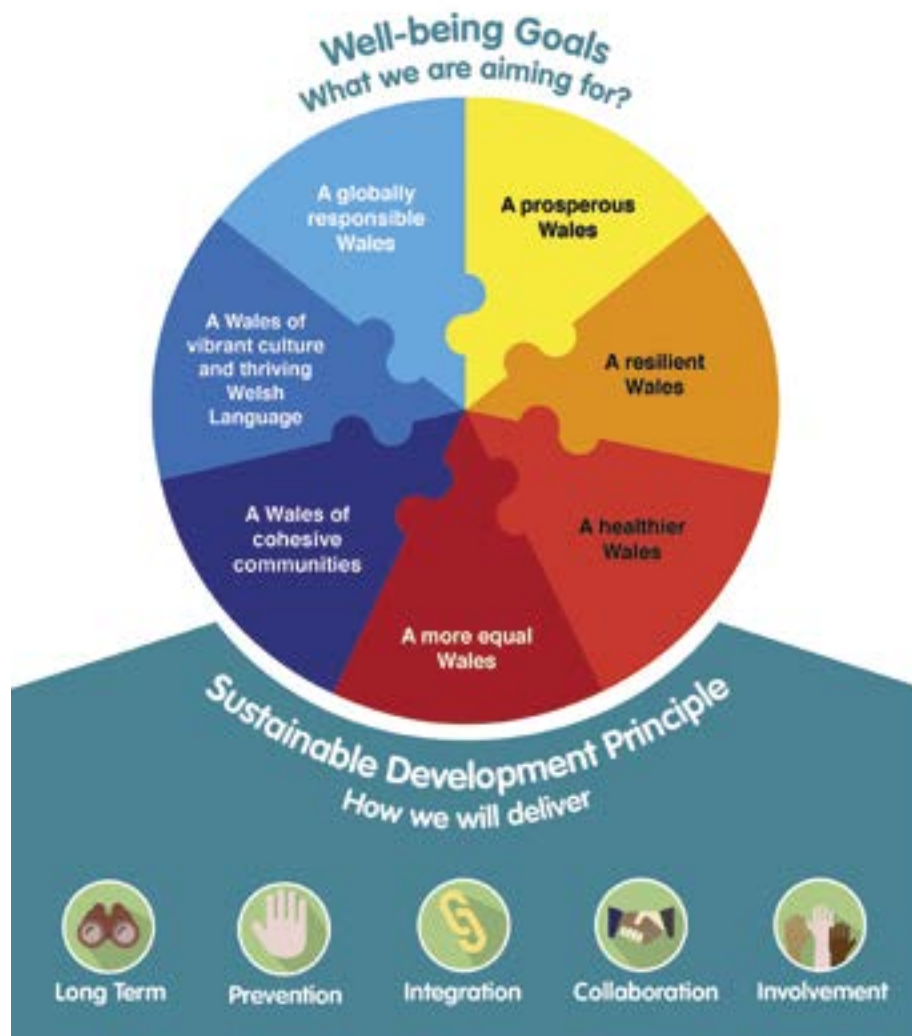
The responses from the consultation and engagement were supplemented by the publication of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's report 'Is Wales Fairer?'¹ The report, based on clear research and evidence, provided details of the extent of progress on equality and human rights covering the period 2010-2015.

Based on the engagement and evidence we developed eight Equality Objectives for 2016-2020 comprising of six refreshed Objectives and two new Objectives. We will publish our Strategic Equality Plan 2016-20, complete with the actions we will be taking to take forward the Equality Objectives, later on in 2016.

¹ EHRC (2015), Is Wales Fairer? The state of equality and human rights 2015. Accessible via www.equalityhumanrights.com/wales-fairer-1

The Equality Objectives seek to address the key equality challenges we face in Wales, many of which are long-standing and inter-generational. Making progress on the Equality Objectives will also contribute to the achievement of the Well-being Goals in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The Act is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and provides us with an opportunity to advance equality in a more integrated and strategic way. More information is available at: www.gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-bill

Provision for a fairer Wales is made in the Act through a specific Well-being Goal, ‘a more equal Wales’ which includes reference to socio-economic inequalities. The Equality Objectives will also contribute to achieving all the Well-being Goals, including ‘a Wales of cohesive communities’ demonstrated by our work on tackling hate crime and strengthening community cohesion; ‘a prosperous Wales’ through closing the education attainment gaps and reducing the number of people not in education, employment or training; ‘a healthier Wales’ through addressing health inequalities; and the goal of ‘a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language’ through encouraging people from protected groups to participate in cultural activities and recreation.



The Act 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.

These five ways of working will guide our work in developing our Strategic Equality Plan and the actions which will drive forward our Equality Objectives.

We are very grateful to everyone who contributed to the development of the Welsh Government Equality Objectives. Individuals who participated in the focus groups, workshops and responded to our consultation; our partners and stakeholder organisations who will work with us in delivery and staff from Welsh Government all provided valuable feedback, evidence and affirmation of the inequalities we are working to address. Without your engagement we would not have been able to develop these Equality Objectives, which will continue to make a real difference to people's lives in Wales.

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 – Internal WG HR objective

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

Rationale

This Objective brings together two of the previous Welsh Government Objectives on independent living, and public service delivery. The new Objective captures all protected groups whilst still recognising 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.

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. Welsh Government analysis² suggested women, disabled people, younger people and ethnic minority groups were more likely to be affected by the UK Government's cuts and would incur the largest income losses. 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 ensuring advice services are promoted to increase awareness of their existence as well as 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 joined up ensuring a more effective network of advice and information between providers.

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.

² Welsh Government (2013) Analysing the impact of the UK Government's welfare reforms in Wales – Stage 3 analysis Part 1: Impacts on those with protected characteristics. Accessible via www.gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/report/130717wr-stage3-analysisv2-en.pdf

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 employment, skills 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 people classed as NEET, which is a key social justice priority for the Welsh Government.

Is Wales Fairer? Report

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

These include closing the attainment gaps by raising standards of children receiving Free School Meals, 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 Special Educational Needs (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.

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.

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 on public services 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 Objective forward has focused more on gender diversity than the other protected groups which 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 improvements to other protected groups, particularly disabled people and ethnic minority people which are 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 increasing diversity in public life. The essence of this challenge has been captured in the new objective.

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. 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 communities. These negative stereotypes often have a disproportionate impact on more disadvantaged communities.

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.

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

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.

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 and engagement indicated the Equality Objectives should more explicitly link with the Tackling Poverty Action Plan and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) 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.

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.