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Democracy
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Commission Cymru

Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report

2024/25

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Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru

Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2024/25

This report sets out the Commission's Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report for 2024/25. The focus for the year has been strengthening our approach to Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) across our boundary review work and any new or revised policies linked to our functions. We have also invested in developing staff capability through training so that equality considerations are embedded consistently in planning, decision-making and delivery. The report concludes with our forward look to 2025/26, including plans to develop the Commission's next Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) and to undertake engagement activity to inform that plan.

1. Introduction and purpose

The Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (the Commission) is responsible for conducting boundary reviews and making recommendations that support effective local democracy in Wales. As a public body, we are committed to advancing equality, fostering good relations and ensuring that our work is accessible and fair for everyone in Wales.

This annual report summarises activity undertaken in 2024/25 in support of our wider equality duties. It highlights how equality has been considered through EIAs for boundary review work and for the development of new or revised policies connected to our statutory functions. It also covers staff training and awareness-raising, and sets out our priorities for 2025/26.

2. Equality duties and our approach

The Commission supports the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act 2010. In Wales, this is complemented by specific equality duties that require public bodies to plan, publish and report on equality objectives, engagement and impact.

We use Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) as a core tool to identify and address potential impacts on people who share protected characteristics, and on groups who may experience barriers to participation. EIAs help us to: test assumptions; use evidence and engagement appropriately; consider mitigations and reasonable adjustments; and record how equality considerations have influenced decisions.

3. Governance, accountability and resourcing

Equality is overseen through the Commission's governance arrangements, with senior leadership providing direction and assurance that equality considerations are integrated into our work programmes. During 2024/25 we continued to embed EIAs into planning and decision-making for boundary reviews and for policy development, supported by internal guidance and staff training.

- We apply an EIA at the start of significant pieces of work (including boundary review programmes and material policy changes), and update it as the work develops.
- EIAs record the evidence considered (including consultation feedback where relevant), anticipated impacts, mitigations and actions.
- Completed EIAs are used to inform recommendations and are retained as part of the audit trail for decision-making.

4. Activity and progress in 2024/25

4.1 EIAs for boundary review work

During 2024/25 we continued to apply EIAs to our boundary review work to ensure equality considerations are addressed alongside statutory criteria and the overall aim of effective and convenient local government. In particular, we considered how our processes and outputs may affect participation in consultations, access to information, and the ability of different communities to engage with proposals. This was reflected in our Senedd Boundary review programme.

- **Accessible engagement:** reviewing how consultation materials are presented (including clarity of maps and explanatory text) and considering alternative formats on request.
- **Welsh language and communication needs:** ensuring communications are inclusive and support participation across Wales.
- **Digital inclusion:** considering the balance of online and offline channels so that people who may face barriers to digital access can still take part.
- **Barriers experienced by specific groups:** considering impacts on older people, disabled people, people with caring responsibilities, and others who may have additional barriers to engaging with formal consultation processes.

4.2 EIAs for new and revised policies

Alongside our boundary review programme, we continued to strengthen how we apply EIAs to new or revised policies linked to our functions. Where policies affect how we

communicate, consult, handle information, or provide services to stakeholders, we assess equality impacts early and revisit them as proposals develop.

- Checking whether any groups may be disadvantaged by changes in processes, timescales or communication methods.
- Using available evidence (including stakeholder feedback and equality data where available) to inform assessments.
- Building in mitigations such as clearer signposting, plain language, accessible formats and targeted engagement where appropriate.
- Recording decisions and actions so that equality considerations are transparent and can be reviewed.

5. Staff training and capability building

To support consistent and high-quality EIAs, equalities training form an essential part of the Commission's annual training programme. This includes :

- Introductory and refresher sessions on equality duties
- Practical guidance on identifying potential impacts, evidencing assessments and developing proportionate mitigations.
- Support for staff involved in consultations and stakeholder engagement, with a focus on inclusive communication and accessibility.
- Improved internal signposting to templates, examples and points of contact for advice.

6. Monitoring, learning and continuous improvement

We recognise that EIAs are most effective when they are treated as a live document that informs choices throughout a project or policy cycle. During 2024/25 we continued to improve how we monitor EIAs, capture learning and strengthen consistency.

- Reviewing EIAs at key decision points to ensure actions and mitigations are implemented and updated.
- Using feedback from consultations and stakeholder engagement to identify barriers and improve future approaches.
- Maintaining a focus on clear, accessible communication as a recurring theme across equality impacts.
- Publishing EIA's alongside our boundary review reports.

7. Priorities and plans for 2025/26

In 2025/26 we will build on the progress made in embedding EIAs and strengthening staff capability. Key priorities will include developing the Commission's next Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) and undertaking engagement activity to inform the plan, ensuring that it reflects the experiences and priorities of people and communities across Wales.

- **Develop the SEP:** refresh our equality objectives, actions and measures, and set out how we will monitor and report progress.
- **Engagement to inform the SEP:** undertake engagement with stakeholders and communities to understand barriers to participation and opportunities to improve how we work.
- **Continue EIA delivery:** ensure EIAs are undertaken and updated for boundary review work and for any new or revised policies linked to our functions.
- **Strengthen guidance and training:** maintain an ongoing programme of learning and refresh internal guidance, including practical examples relevant to the Commission's work.