

Have your say event.

“Tell us what fairness means to you”

Friday 11th December 2015, Llandrindod Wells, Powys.

Background:

Public organisations in Wales are tasked with producing a Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) every four years and to do so using relevant evidence, data sets and residents' voice to ensure any objectives to tackle and reduce discrimination or inequality are well informed and based on local needs.

SEPs are a requirement of the Equality Act 2010. The Act gives specific protection to people on the basis of their:

- Race
- Sex
- Age
- Religion and belief
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage/Civil partnership status

Under the Act public sector organisations need to have 'due regard' to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The following organisations have been reviewing their strategic equality plans (SEPs) and came together in 2015 to jointly consult:

Dyfed Powys Police; Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service; Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust; Hywel Dda University Health Board; Powys Teaching Health Board; the local authorities of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Powys; Pembrokeshire national park; Coleg Sir Gar and other further education colleges.

Consultation approach:

A mixed methods approach was employed to elicit the views and experiences of stakeholders across Dyfed Powys. One master survey was produced and publicised by all partners to capture the views and perceptions of residents across the region.

The Executive Summary Report which provides the findings from the regional survey can be found at:

www.powys.gov.uk and using the search tab type in “fairness” or “equalities”.

Local stakeholder events were then held in each of the four regions to discuss topics like health inequalities, education, crime and housing.

This two pronged approach increased the robustness of the collected data from the survey (quantitative) with the more open type focus group events (qualitative data) to provide comparability of results.

Below is a summary of the views captured during the focus group session held in Powys.

Attendees were firstly given a short introduction about the purpose of the session and then split into two groups. Each group then focused on a key theme and the facilitator firstly shared and explained the key results from the regional survey and then asked those attending to consider four key questions.

1. Did the results from the survey match their own experiences or perceptions of the theme?
2. What does disadvantage in this particular area look like to them?
3. What works well in terms of reducing discrimination?
4. What would make a difference?

The discussions and the conversations held are summed up on the following pages per theme and were used by all the partners to help shape the final objectives included in their Strategic Equality Plans.

The themes discussed were:

- Health,
- Education and training,
- Housing,
- Employment,
- Crime and Access to justice,
- Physical Activity,
- Community Cohesion.

Themed discussion: Health

1. Do survey results match your experience?

This discussion focused primarily on Powys Teaching Health Board's objectives for their refreshed Strategic Equality Plan.

The comments noted were as follows:

Care for mental health not custody. Help should be given before custody.

There is a need for a middle organisation between home and needing a 100% care.

Regarding care packages, Social Services need to review a couple as a package not separately.

Regarding the care package not all needs are seen to when a member of the public comes out of hospital. Do things in the right order and a timely way.

Not enough provision to meet the need.

Zenton school counselling has had its finance cut but the waiting list is massive.

Provide a structure of support to aid a child who is struggling mentally.

3rd sector are at the mercy of policy e.g. Pont Hafren.

Why don't you go away and try something and come back stating progress if it worked or not.

Cross border working can be very frustrating. Appointments cancelled because Powys Teaching Health Board haven't paid their bill. It's the patient who suffers.

Be open, transparent and communicate.

2. What does disadvantage feel like?

Need workers who have experienced disadvantage for themselves.

Most disadvantaged can't go private.

No parent craft (antenatal) classes for anyone expecting a baby.

3. What works well?

Virtual wards

GPs working with Age Cymru

Men in Sheds

Macmillan nurses and Bracken Trust are excellent.

4. What would make a difference?

If care and support worked better as a team and involved the family.

Improve cultural awareness.

Not making assumptions about a person.

Themed discussion: Employment

1. Do survey results match your experience?

Yes although some points made about specific protected characteristics.

Gender: Men. This wasn't picked up via the regional survey. Was this because men didn't complete the survey? Or perhaps don't want to articulate problems they have in getting work?

Disability. Agreement that work for people with disabilities likely to be even harder to find in current climate. Employers can select from wide field. Small firms not able to offer additional support to people who may need it. Educating employers is the key to changing this. Fear of disruption and time prevents progress. View given that prejudice does exist. People with disabilities often offered volunteering opportunities or training but not jobs that pay well. Job Centre needs to do more. High Jinx theatre does some excellent work with people with Downs Syndrome.

Race: BME experiences differed – one person had never had any discrimination whilst another had been too overqualified and in interviews faced disbelief and discrimination.

Age: Young people – support for those who are NEET needed. A number move away to find work post school/university. Young people can face ageism re- being perceived too young to have any experience or skills. Example given by participant of this. More needed re- Powys Training and apprenticeships.

Age: Older people – prejudice exists – older candidates can be deemed unsuitable but we have a changing demographic so need to change approach to employing older people. If long term unemployed or returning to workforce need support.

Social and Health care considered to be a more diverse workforce.

Some concerns expressed about employment black listing. One person felt that their job prospects were blighted because they had spoken out on various things.

Many examples of persons having to apply for jobs just because they need to meet targets for benefits.

There are pockets of diversity within Powys but as a whole not a very diverse county.

2. What does disadvantage feel like?

Big push on going back to work → monetary incentive to going back.

The young are moving out of Powys to find employment and not returning as not enough opportunities.

Age – lack of opportunities for young, old and those middle aged.

Returning to education as a mature student and no support given like what is available to the young e.g. WG schemes 18-25 year olds.

The distance required to travel in Powys disadvantages people but particularly young people or those who cannot afford a car.

Zero hour contracts.

Part-time work may not be what people want but all that is available. Some people end up doing 2 part-time jobs. Low pay.

Lack of opportunities for people on long term sick etc.

Lack of volunteers.

Less opportunities for work therefore people have to go further afield to find jobs.

No opportunities for BME and disabled compounded further by no opportunities out there.

Finding a parking place re- work can be difficult. Poor planning of car park spaces angers most sensible citizens.

Impact on successive generations for jobs availability.

Poor view of and over reliance on Job Centre. Puts pressure on people to find a job but lack of support. There is an issue for those attending the Job Centre to apply for a specific number of jobs. If they don't meet this they don't get their benefit. However the criteria is wrong for some jobs which makes it nigh impossible for people to work. Change the filters. Same applies to PCC essential criteria. Are some of these really essential? Revisit and simplify to help people get into work or get their benefit.

3. What works well?

Grants for setting up business and charities.

Job shops although transport can be an issue for people to attend at times organised.

Barclays – Skills for Success Programme.

4. What would make a difference?

If job centers didn't put people forward for roles that aren't suitable – not helpful for either the organisation or the individual who can be made to feel like they are failing when they don't get an interview or a job offer.

Work with individuals to assist them with their applications – some of the onus should be on the employers not making applications too complex. It's not just a job center issue.

The essential criteria should be "essential" and not be a subjective "wish list" but accurate to the job role. Also sometimes the focal point is on a person's education/qualifications

and this can preclude other qualities from being seen as important when determining whether to shortlist.

More job opportunities – solid infrastructures needed.

Powys County Council to be more flexible in terms of planning regulations to aid and encourage investment in jobs.

Solid industry manufacturing and looking at border issues and catchment areas where people live and can travel to.

Look at the LDP and potential for land use and inward investment opportunities.

Themed discussion: Crime and Access to justice

1. Do survey results match your experience?

Yes overall.

Experience of black, minority and ethnic groups (BME). Hate crime given by participant re- a family member.

Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgender (LGBT). Hate crime can be difficult to report as there is a perception that it won't be taken seriously.

Disability. It was noted that the Police were often the first to respond to incidents of persons in mental distress. Although it was recognised that they aren't always the right people to respond to such incidents, it was also recognised that they are sometimes the only people available.

2. What does disadvantage feel like?

Disability – Access to services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, although it was noted that a new non-emergency text messaging service had been introduced.

Lack of awareness re- who is your local police officer.

Fear from some that reporting of some crimes e.g. hate crime perceived as wasting police time.

Cultural differences can cause disadvantage and issues e.g. Polish communities have different social conventions and have been issues in Newtown and Welshpool where other residents unhappy at congregation of groups in streets.

Some concerns expressed regarding the plans to house six Syrian families in Newtown and whether residents of Powys would have perceived and incorrect assumptions which could cause problems re: community cohesion. Possible hate crime towards these families was a concern and a view expressed that perhaps residents would harbor inaccurate and harmful views about said families moving into the area which weren't actually founded but could cause bad feelings.

On a more general point, BME groups can feel harassed in communities in Powys as they are in a minority.

3. What works well?

The right person (s) in the front line roles.

Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) building up relationships with young people via schools or estates so they know they can trust them and go to them. Being human not alien. Relationship built on some estates. Links then to police but less obvious/visible.

Ringmaster Service – Trading Standards service promotes scams and alerts businesses and residents who sign up to it re- crime issues. Can help prevent people getting duped by doorstep salespeople.

Pegasus scheme. The Pegasus Scheme operated by Dyfed-Powys Police was noted as working well. Persons with communication difficulties are encouraged to sign up to the scheme in order to alert front line staff and officers that the individual has additional communication needs.

4. What would make a difference?

The right person (s) in the front line roles.

People with mental health issues not being detained in a police cell. Someone who had had a trauma to work with the police to learn and shape future provision.

Police school liaison officers who go into the schools being more personable. Vitality needed. 1st impressions count. Some lack experience in how best to communicate with young people.

Raising awareness of roles and who is your contact in your local community. Also promotion of non-emergency number and how different groups can report crime. I.e. Texting for hard of hearing. Raise awareness via website. Keeping information up to date for residents.

Community champions or leaders to promote equality.

People reporting all types of crime and not feeling or being made to feel stupid for doing so or maybe being caught out via a scam etc.

Schools education agenda re: equality. Needs to be built in more re- PSE lessons.

PCSO's taking the time to stop and have a chat to people who have a disability or who are older and possibly more vulnerable whilst out and about in their local community. Taking that time to speak to people to find out any issues and offer reassurance.

Themed discussion: Education

1. Do survey results match your experience?

Participants didn't feel they could agree or disagree with the results from the regional figure.

One participant quoted figures re- bullying in schools from Estyn and queried how accurate these actually were in reality. Participant queried whose view was captured re bullying – the teacher's, the parents or the pupils? Definition of what 'bullying' constitutes is unclear.

2. What does disadvantage feel like?

Response to this was to cite leadership is key in solving any inequality in education.

Where do the discriminatory attitudes come from?

Observation that austerity could be a contributory factor.

Also attitudes need to be changed. (This was an open observation which did not identify which attitudes needed changing or whose).

Demoralising and leads to stigmatization sometimes.

Decline in classes for adults. Vocational e.g. sewing, car mechanics. (The afternoon group looked more at older people)

Transport – lack of and timing of the classes for adult education. Day time more beneficial for older people rather than evenings.

Transport in Knighton area is a problem. Cross border working between Powys and England needed regarding Education and also transport.

3. What works well?

Role models. We need more role models in school. BME. Male, disabled

Tackle discrimination during the preschool and foundation phase.

Children thrive with good parenting.

The benefits of small schools offering more support to the disadvantaged.

Accountability – meaning not “buck passing”

Quality and experience dependent on teacher

WI have lots of activities. (This countered the need for adult vocational classes. Find out and publicise what is actually happening. Nordic walking an example. Also the University of the 3rd age. However, transport a continual issue.

Issues:

Closure of Nantmel primary school.

- No broadband
- No buses
- Rural inequality

Play equipment: No toys. No diversity reflected in early play. Start early. People at the top have to make the change.

It was a mistake segregating special needs children. These children should be mainstreamed but with support. The need for support was stressed.

Burning issue. Which of the high schools will close?

4. What would make a difference

Highly qualified, experienced and perceptive practitioners required – not just “qualified” Inexperienced “professionals”.

Need more apprenticeships. For older people as well. Apprenticeships cited as something that used to work well.

Community champions.

Upskilling children. The loss of singing programs at school was quoted. Make more use of the lunchtime period. Go back to the full hour at lunch enabling participation of clubs. Children can't always attend after school activities in a rural area given the transport problems. . . .

Themed discussion: Housing

1. Do survey results match your experience?

Participants didn't feel they could agree or disagree with the results from the regional figure.

2. What does disadvantage feel like?

Availability of housing for young people.

Concern regarding asylum seekers. (both perception that asylum seekers are taking houses and also that they are being housed without necessary support systems in place to address their particular needs).

Blame. Perception that BMEs are taking away houses. Need to look at the problem and be fair with housing allocation.

Younger people's feeling of self-worth correlated to housing.

People need somewhere safe to live. Example given of family living in transit van who were helped by Action for Children following referral from Salvation Army. Council refused to help. Lessons have subsequently been learned. Praise for the voluntary and 3rd sector was a recurring theme.

Another example given of an Indian family with a member with mental health issues needing help. Neighbours appear to offer more support and advice than PCC or other organisations.

Another example given of a family who moved from the midlands to rural area. Discovered that there was not transport to pre-school. Found the Housing application process antiquated.

Social housing worked well. Discussion about the loss of social housing to private ownership. Criticism of bedroom tax.

Lot of inequality. Adapted council houses remain so even if circumstances change.

Not in my backyard, Mistrust between community and PCC about people who are moving in.

Bias relating to planning application. Example given of a factory being refused set up in Powys having been wrongly judged to be industrial. In fact it was a timber business in keeping with the environment. (perception).

3. What works well?

A social initiative called Men in sheds was discussed. This project offers Sanctuary for groups of men. Those who are socially isolated including Ethnic aspects. Llanbister currently the only place but hopefully will expand. One of the issues here was that rural housing can be isolating and affect Mental Health.

4. What would make a difference?

“We know if people have better housing mental health is better. What power do we have?”

The need for more diverse and directed (focused) recruitment was raised. Both in Education, housing and also generally within PCC (and the Health Board?). This would help to address the diversity imbalance within the workforce. More diversity would help to ensure more fairness and understanding of problems.

Need for economical houses. Why not go back to building pre-fabs.

Make houses ecological and affordable to run.

Investigate funding provided to organisations for issues around older people houses. They are not always suitable for the aging population.

Jobs to accompany houses.

Keep people home. In Powys and in their home. Provide housing for young people and keep old people in their homes longer rather than institutionalizing them.

Housing to be energy efficient and of good quality. Mention made of the poor state of much of the older housing in Powys albeit much of it in the private sector. Poor housing contributes to poor physical and mental health.

Themed discussion: Physical Activity

1. Do survey results match your experience?

Yes on the whole. Protected characteristic information as follows:

Age: Issues for older people wishing to access leisure and sports activities due to buses not coinciding with activities. Need more activities in the daytime so more accessible. A lot are post 6pm when lack of transport or dark. Lack of bus services mean impact on independence of older and disabled residents and those without access to alternative transport. (car, taxi, bike) Also cost can prohibit older people from taking part in leisure activities if budgets tight. Plans to close day centres will have a huge impact – these were sold as giving people more power – elderly want these opportunities.

Disability: Definitely agree that people with disabilities have less access and are thus discriminated against on the whole from partaking in a number of leisure and sports activities.

Gender - Men: One view given that activities for men can be limited. Men tend to be active in football and rugby but otherwise if this doesn't appeal not too many opportunities exist. Discussion re- extending WI to men.

Gender – Women: Two WI representatives said they have lots of activities for their members from curling to dance classes; bowling to table tennis etc. Some activities tried and failed. Archery. They take into account members with disabilities and adapt. E.g. clay pigeon shooting. Membership is just £36 a year. Hold events throughout the county in community halls and leisure facilities. Discussion about promotion of WIs as they have capacity to take on more members. How do we do this?

General View: Residents can't expect PCC to provide everything. Need to look out for ourselves. Some discrimination experienced still by people who are not indigenous to area. Exclusion of people who have lived in the area for 30+ years but came from elsewhere does still happen.

Pregnancy/New Mums: Public health looking at this matter.

2. What does disadvantage feel like?

Frustrating and isolating re- older people not being able to get to leisure pursuits due to transport/cost issues.

Cost to families of physical activities

Accessing services for people who are wheelchair users

Warmth for people with babies or with disabilities.

Lack of transport – public transport to access services.

Lack of dance type classes.

Some parking problems to access some classes.

Lack of activities for older men.

3. What works well?

The W.I.

Leisure centres across Powys do offer a range of activities and more open to listening now and making changes – better than PCC.

Nordic Walking course – Age Cymru

LIFT course.

Knighton – good football and rugby clubs exist for young people and boys.

Wheelchair bowling in Llandrindod.

NHS Safe and Well – keeping fit. Instructor is army cadet.

4. What would make a difference

More accessible activities including better bus routes and times to coincide with certain classes aimed at older people. Bowling, swimming etc.

Extending WI to men.

Difficult to get enough people on board to establish groups – lack of promotion

More promotion of what's going on in the communities.

More accessible services through more transport being available.

PCC to promote more activities to encourage people. More communications/public relations.

Themed discussion: Cohesive communities. (See also Crime discussion as some parallels exist)

1. Do survey results match your experience?

Some seem right. Generic comment given re- there being a double edged sword re- community cohesion in communities. Smaller communities may offer more safety however otherwise there are barriers to accessing communities per se – re transport.

PC comments made as follows.

Disability: Mobility scooters and users can be seen to be a nuisance. Lack of respect exists for some disabled residents and also lack of understanding of how disability impacts on someone's life. Families who have a disabled child do not get to socialise as much if their children attend specialist schools or centres. The parents don't get to know other parents in the community and can be very isolated over weekends/school holidays etc. Also parents of children with disabilities but who do access mainstream can be equally disadvantaged if child has social phobias and doesn't enjoy crowds etc. Limited options for leisure activities and involvement in community events like carnivals or fireworks etc. Couples who are childless and have a disability may also struggle to feel part of the community.

Gender – Men: Men can be quite isolated in communities if they are not in work or disabled etc. Also could be in work but pressurized job and no time to mix with other men. Could also be single/divorced etc? Malnourished and depressed. Associated risk of suicide in men aged 35+. Men in Sheds was formed in Australia in 2008. 1000+ sheds now in existence. It's a social group setting for men. Men can be less inclined to discuss emotional wellbeing. Linked to health/operations and coming out of hospital. Provides opportunities for men to do carpentry, mechanics in a workshop type setting/shed with other men shoulder to shoulder. Different caring environment. Provides comradeship, avoids isolation, a sanctuary with no pressure. Men can go whenever, for however long. No strings. Get to chat in a setting that is clam and not a typical place assumed for men i.e. the pub! Healthier option. 200+ in Ireland now. Participant looking to set up a shed in Powys. He was unemployed. A number have been set up by Age UK.

LGBT: a shift in attitude has occurred resulting in more acceptance but still a lack of understanding per se of some of the issues. e.g. if single sex gay couple do you hold hands when walking down a Powys street or not? Consideration of these issues are a daily factor for LGBT people still. Not as free as should be.

Sexuality: For transgender people there can be issues with hurtful comments from children/others. Type of hate crime.

BME: likely to be an issue still re- community cohesion. Normally down to lack of understanding.

Age: Older people who care for their partner may feel isolated if caring role means they cannot really socialise.

1. What does disadvantage feel like?

Attitudes and community cohesion can differ between Powys towns and rural areas.

Some rural communities are quite close knit and very supportive of everyone living within them. Towns may be less so. However bigger populations may allow for more privacy for particular PCs – transgender, gay, disability etc.

Example of transgender woman isolated within her community. Children making comments.

2. What works well?

Some communities that rally round a particular family or person who is in need of extra care or support. Example given on Newtown disabled son and mother who were supported by community.

Awareness of school pupils who are now educated and understand more some of the equality issues that exist for specific people.

Action for children can help families who need support re- activities, leisure, relationships etc.

3. What would make a difference

Education, informing and challenging perceptions.

Community understanding and tolerance.

Integration and support needed for schools and pupils with SEN and disabilities to allow them to attend community type events with classmates perhaps rather than families.