

Estyn Annual Equality Report 2025

This report is also available in Welsh

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Foreword

We are here for learners, for Wales. Our strategic Equality Plan for 2024 to 2028 set out ambitious equality objectives to support our mission to support education and training providers to develop a self-improving and learning culture through our advice, inspection and capacity building. Our equality objectives cover how we consider equality when we inspect. It also covers how we will ensure that our staff and those we contract with have equality of opportunity and are treated equally.

One year in, we feel that we have made good progress on our journey. We have launched the second cohort of our Ethnic Minority Leaders Programme, hopefully nurturing future leaders and future inspectors. We have continued to seek out best practice and review our own recruitment processes and embedded equality, diversity and inclusion on our induction and professional learning programmes for our staff. We have sought out effective practice in education providers' journeys towards being anti-racist and shared these through our [annual report](#) and [a podcast](#).

This report summarises our progress so far and identifies new areas of focus which we will use to update our strategic equality plan. There is more to do, and we will keep working with learners, educational professionals and our staff to evolve our approaches to ensure that we continue to make a difference in creating a more equal Wales, as well as being a welcoming employer of choice for our staff.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Owen Evans', is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Owen Evans

His Majesty's Chief Inspector

Introduction

In April 2024, we published our [Strategic Equality Plan](#). This annual equality report reviews our progress in line with our responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

1 What information we collect and how we use it

We recognise the vital importance of data and insight to both monitor and drive progress during the Strategic Equality Plan period. We collect a wide range of robust data across a range of areas, including workforce (across all protected characteristics), recruitment, starters and leavers.

We use this data to monitor the diversity of applications to our vacancies, and identify any barriers in our recruitment process and ensure our recruitment practices are fair and inclusive at every stage. For existing staff, collecting and monitoring equality data helps us to understand the diversity of our workforce, identify and address any disparities in experience, development, or progression and shape policies and initiatives that support inclusion and equity across Estyn.

We will publish this data alongside our annual report and accounts each year. We will publish an updated set of data by September 2025.

2 Progress against our equality objectives

Equality objective 1: We will work to increase the diversity of our staff, our external inspectors and the stakeholder voices that enrich our work

We said we will:

- review our staff recruitment processes to consider what more we can do to increase the diversity of our staff, including considering how to achieve more diversity on interview panels
- review and further develop our leadership programme to raise awareness of our work with aspiring education leaders from ethnic backgrounds that are underrepresented in our staff and external inspector workforce
- improve the data we hold about our external inspector workforce to better understand any underrepresented groups
- actively work with a variety of national stakeholder groups to ensure our next lay inspector recruitment leads to a more diverse pool of lay inspectors

- review our recruitment materials and processes for external inspectors to ensure they represent the full diversity of Wales and meet best practice
- ensure that our parents forum includes parents with different protected characteristics
- continue to engage with other bodies, stakeholders and groups who champion specific protected characteristics internally and externally in order to consider how we and those we inspect can improve policies and work processes to become more diverse and meet the needs of a diverse Wales
- review our complaints and feedback procedures, to ensure they are in line with best practice and accessible to all

Progress this year:

- We regularly update our recruitment materials and ensure a diversity of representation in our promotion. We ensure that there are clear statements about equality and diversity in our recruitment packs and benchmark our processes against best and recommended practice.
- We continued to reach out to equalities organisations as part of recruitment campaigns. We've also contacted other organisations (Cardiff Metropolitan University and the Welsh Government) to identify how they ensure diversity on interview panels.
- We reviewed our ethnic minority leaders programme and ran with our second cohort – there was good take up, and strong input from external mentors. We extended to include initial teacher education this year.
- We reviewed and updated our complaints procedure.

However:

- Although we have not yet surveyed our external inspector workforce, we are encouraged that several candidates from our Ethnic Minority Leaders Programme have successfully progressed into peer inspector training.
- We undertook a widespread recruitment campaign for our parents and carers' forum but we plan to actively promote this forum to a more diverse group in our next recruitment round.

Equality Objective 2: We will promote equal opportunities and ensure fair treatment for our entire workforce, staff and contracted inspectors, tackling bullying and discrimination whenever it occurs.

We said we will:

- develop our ongoing programme of staff training and development to ensure our workforce works actively to promote equality of opportunity, tackle bullying and

discrimination and in particular ensure we are an anti-racist organisation and ensure temporary staff have full access to these programmes

- review our induction procedures to ensure that they set clear expectations and have a strong focus on the public sector equality duty, for example by working closely with new staff with a disability to ensure that we plan and make helpful reasonable adjustments for them
- develop opportunities for managers to be involved in reverse mentoring and coaching with community leaders
- review the use of our equality impact assessment process to further strengthen its impact
- ensure that all members of staff consider an equality and diversity related objective as part of their performance management
- delivery of our staff conference on mental health awareness
- review the ways in which staff can raise concerns and contribute ideas to improve our workplace

Progress so far:

- We continued to include equality and diversity sessions for all new staff as part of induction and all staff complete a brief module on their equalities responsibilities as part of our mandatory training on civil service expectations. We've also incorporated an initial session on bullying and harassment awareness as part of induction.
- For new staff with a disability, we routinely refer to occupational health on appointment and work with the member of staff to agree and record any workplace adjustments on their workplace adjustment passport.
- We reviewed the use of our equality impact assessments and promoted their use. We also provided training for our staff alongside our equality impact assessment guidelines to help them gain a deeper understanding of their equalities responsibilities when they begin to create new policies or review existing policies.
- We have continued to promote wellbeing across the organisation.

However:

- We have had early discussions about how to pilot reverse mentoring but will progress over the coming year.
- We will focus on inclusive line management as part of our review of performance management arrangements.

Equality Objective 3: We will evaluate issues relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion during inspection and in our thematic work, sharing good practice and making recommendations for improvement where needed

We said we will:

- include a cross-cutting theme relating to progress towards an Anti-racist Wales in our annual report – this will include a preliminary review of the ways in which schools are beginning to develop curricula that reflect the cross-cutting theme of diversity and what types of further support they may need
- start collecting demographic data as part of any surveys we carry out with learners, staff, parents or other stakeholders so we can improve our national evidence base of stakeholders' views
- ensure where appropriate that our inspections consider barriers to recruitment onto educational programmes of underrepresented groups of learners, for example in ITE, Welsh for Adults and apprenticeships
- carry out an equalities impact on our new inspection arrangements and each thematic review we do
- consider the implications of the Welsh Government's LGBTQ+ action plan in our work
- review the evidence base emerging from our inspections in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion and specifically in relation to:
 - how well the curriculum develops learners' understanding of diverse histories, stories, identities, values and perspectives, including of their local area, in Wales and in the wider world across the areas of learning and experience
 - how effectively the provider's systems support accurate reporting and recording of all types of bullying and harassment
 - how well they address harmful behaviours and attitudes identified amongst individuals and groups, including through targeted and universal provision
- continue to collect and promote examples of effective practice in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion that help to raise expectations and improve practice – in particular we will consider how we can use this proactively to support improvement for groups who experience particular disadvantage within the education system, for example learners from the Gypsy Roma and Traveller community
- work with the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research and Welsh Government to ensure that there are improved national data sets that help us understand the experiences and educational outcomes of learners with different protected characteristics

Progress so far:

- We published a cross-cutting theme for the annual report 'Towards an Anti-racist Wales', which was published in February alongside Welsh and English medium podcasts on this theme.
- We piloted the use of demographic data as part of pre-inspection surveys and continue to pilot before roll out in September 2025.
- We provided advice to the Welsh Government on reporting of bullying and racist incidents and have ongoing reviews of behaviour in secondary schools and FE colleges.
- We plan to cover provision for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community as a cross-cutting theme in next year's annual report.
- We identified the need to improve national data sets as part of our feedback to Medr.
- We have continued to provide advice on Welsh Government policy and guidance developments in relation to LGBTQ+ learners.

However:

- It is still a challenge to capture inspection evidence in relation to specific groups of learners as part of routine inspections.
- The Welsh Government has prioritised funding other thematic reviews for the next financial year, which do not have a specific equality or diversity focus. We will consider how we can look at any impacts for specific groups as part of these.
- We will consider how we might need to respond the government's LGBTQ+ action plan as part of this year's update to our strategic equality plan.

3 Our integrated equality impact assessments

During this year we reviewed and repromoted our integrated equality impact assessments and guidance. These Impact Assessments help ensure that the impact of a policy is taken into account before key decisions are made on its implementation in Estyn. Equality impact assessments are regularly used, for example in our:

- new inspection arrangements
- information governance policies, publication scheme and privacy notices
- environmental policy
- new social media policy
- stakeholder engagement strategy
- IT usage policy
- our use of artificial intelligence

- human resources policies such as our family friendly policy

These assessments have resulted in changes being made. For example, our equalities impact assessment of our new privacy notices identified that they weren't very accessible or understandable for young learners, so we produced a child-friendly version, which we have published on our website. Our equality impact assessment for our environmental policy identified that we should include further examples of best practice identified during our work that affects specific groups. Our 2025 environmental policy will include practice identified during inspection and thematic work relating to groups with protected characteristics such as LGBTQ+ groups, and regarding issues around poverty and religion.

In March 2025, we provided practical assistance to staff in carrying out an equality impact assessment with training delivered by Diverse Cymru/Adferiad. This is being rolled out more widely in the Summer term 2025.

4 Areas of future focus added to our Strategic equality plan

Having reviewed our progress, we have identified the following areas of focus to strengthen in our strategic equality plan for the coming year:

- Carry out an audit of our work in support of the Welsh Government's LGBTQ+ Action Plan
- Roll out cohort 3 of our ethnic minority leaders' programme
- Publish a cross-cutting theme in our annual report about the impact of provision for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils
- Ensure that our recruitment of non-executive directors ensures a diverse set of members for our strategy board
- Strengthen our lead inspector capacity to take forward and promote our work to deliver the strategic equalities plan through delivery of our revised leadership role structure
- Develop an anti-poverty strategy to develop our role in helping to ensure that all learners' have the opportunity to achieve