



Manifesto for a fair and equal Wales

Diverse Cymru calls on all political parties and candidates to put equality for all and human rights at the heart of the 2021 Welsh Parliament election.

Background

Diverse Cymru believes that equality and human rights should be at the heart of every decision politicians make affecting Wales. They must consider the impact of their policies on all people; understanding that every individual is potentially affected by discrimination, poverty and unfair treatment. We must stand up for the human rights of all people in Wales.

The current Coronavirus pandemic has highlighted inequalities that exist in Wales. The disproportionate impacts on BAME, disabled, and older people are clearly evidenced and concerning. Younger people are experiencing higher levels of unemployment, carers and women are facing additional challenges. Communities that face barriers to accessing services and who experience poorer mental health are facing additional barriers. These include disabled, BAME, older, and LGBT people. There is a need for the strong leadership to promote equality for all and celebrate diversity. We cannot return to business as usual, which entrenches inequalities. We must build back better and take this opportunity to radically reform policies and practice in Wales to advance equality for everyone in Wales.

A ‘one size fits all’ approach will not meet the equalities requirements of people with one or more protected characteristics. We need to recognise and act on the voices and experiences of people in Wales, including intersectional issues. Failure to make this fundamental shift in the way we address equality and diversity will leave many people in Wales at risk of discrimination, poverty and injustice.

Key areas of action

In this manifesto we call on all political parties and candidates to commit to action to address inequalities and advance rights for all people facing inequality in Wales. We are calling for action in 6 key areas:

1. Enshrine human rights and equality for all in Welsh law, policy and action
2. Health and social care must provide an integrated, seamless service, which actively recognises and accounts for each individual's views, wishes, and circumstances
3. Build back better as we recover from Covid-19
4. All transport must be accessible, safe, and inclusive
5. All information must be accessible and inclusive
6. Positive action for increased representation of all under-represented groups and involvement of diverse people

1. Enshrine human rights and equality for all in Welsh law, policy and action

Legislation, guidance and policy must address specific issues and experiences of people with each of the protected characteristics and carers in Wales. This must include highlighting and addressing intersectional disparities and experiences.

All Human Rights treaties, conventions and principles should be translated directly into Welsh legislation and practice. This includes CEDAW, CERD, and CRDP alongside the Principles for Older People and agreements on LGBT+ rights.

There are a range of areas which should be addressed to ensure that legislation improves the lives of people who experience discrimination and disadvantage in Wales.

Implementing a human rights based approach in policy and practice must include active consideration and involvement of the full range of voices in Welsh society, including people with more than one protected characteristic.

Legislation, policy and practice must be co-produced with individuals representing the diversity of Wales across all characteristics to ensure that it respects every individual and advances equality for all.

There is significant evidence that legislative compliance is not reflected in people's experiences of barriers to accessing services and in discrimination in Wales. This implementation gap must be closed.

Effective monitoring and ensuring that the public are directly involved in continually evaluating the effectiveness of steps taken to advance equality and human rights are vital.

The approach and requirements in relation to Equality Impact

Assessments must be revised. The current emphasis is all too often on quantitative evidence and minimising negative impacts. Engagement with diverse people is often lacking. The emphasis should be on ensuring maximum positive impact of all legislation, policies, strategies, and actions on the full range of diverse people and advancing equality. Direct and ongoing engagement is a vital aspect of this and requires investment.

In-depth equality and diversity training, which includes a programme of specific sessions on the wide range of protected characteristic groups and sub-groups, must be standard practice in all organisations for all staff. During periods of recession investment in comprehensive equality and diversity training has been cut. This risks overlooking the issues experienced by people with one or more protected characteristics and exacerbating existing inequalities. In-depth and ongoing programmes of equality and diversity training must be seen as essential alongside topics such as health and safety.

Equality and diversity must be embedded into the curriculum. The content of all subjects should be reviewed to ensure that BAME people, disabled people, LGBT+ people, and women are fully represented. This is particularly true in history, but extends to other subjects, such as examples used in mathematics textbooks.

2. Health and social care must provide an integrated, seamless service, which actively recognises and accounts for each individual's views, wishes, and circumstances

Whenever we talk about health and social care services below, we are referring to all health services, unless specified. This includes mental health services and should be read as physical and mental health services and support, as well as services for learning disabled people, unless otherwise specified.

Health, wellbeing, and social care services must ensure support and treatment are integrated, holistic, and tailored for diverse communities across Wales.

Delays to receiving appropriate care and support when transitioning from healthcare to social care must be addressed. The funding must follow the individual and meet their individual requirements, to avoid any delays to receiving social care.

Health and social care services must work with individuals to identify and address causes or contributing factors to poor health, such as housing, lack of support, poor or no access to community services and inappropriate mental health services.

Social care must be seen as just as valuable to society as health care. The workforce should be highly valued and investment should be made into social care.

Mental health must be seen as an equal priority to physical health, including public health messages, quick and early access to support, tackling stigma, and providing tailored services to meet the needs of different protected characteristics.

A comprehensive and multi-sectorial approach to mental health promotion, prevention, treatment, care and recovery is vital. This approach must be culturally sensitive and competent. It must take full account of all the diversity and equality factors each individual experiences.

Health and social care services must be better tailored to meet the needs of people from different equality groups. Specialist services are

required, that fully recognise and address barriers to appropriate service provision. All services must also be more flexible and less rigid, enabling true flexibility to meet the needs, wishes and outcomes of each individual.

All health and social care professionals and services should receive comprehensive equality and diversity training. This should include in-depth training in the needs and issues for each protected characteristic group and sub-groups, including unconscious bias, anti-racism, and cultural competency training.

Support for carers should be improved, including training, mental health support, respite and a specific bereavement service for carers.

Investment in advocacy, including specialist advocacy services, is needed to ensure that barriers to accessing services and receiving equal outcomes are addressed.

3. Build back better as we recover from Covid-19

As we recover from Covid-19 it is vital that all political parties and candidates in Wales place equality and human rights front and centre of all legislation, strategies, policies, programmes, and actions.

The impact on all different communities and groups in Wales must be monitored and action taken to ensure that we emerge from this crisis stronger and more equal, rather than equality and human rights being detrimentally affected.

Older, younger, disabled, and BAME people and women are already disproportionately impacted by higher unemployment and lower wages. The current crisis has deepened and highlighted these inequalities.

Pay gaps must be analysed and addressed by employers, not just in relation to the gender pay gap, but also in relation to the disability and ethnicity pay gaps. Organisations should also regularly review whether there are any pay gaps on other characteristics and take action where these are identified.

The next Welsh Parliament should implement a Universal Basic Income, alongside implementing the Socio-Economic Duty in Wales. This would ensure that no-one in Wales falls below the poverty line and actively

address socio-economic inequalities, which are often linked to protected characteristics.

Support and training needs to be in place to address under-representation in workplaces, including at more senior levels. More work needs to be done in respect of equalities for older people in work and for training.

Flexible working practices have positive impacts for many disabled people, women, and carers. Disabled people have been calling for flexible working practices for years, and many have been denied. The current crisis has highlighted what is possible. Flexible working practices must become standard practice in the future for all employees.

Policies and practices must be reviewed to ensure that they support flexible working and are appropriate for all employees.

Workplaces must be safe, supportive and inclusive for everyone. This must include addressing the culture of presenteeism and creating a culture where all employees and workers can raise concerns, such as around PPE, without fear of losing working hours or their job.

Isolation has been a significant impact of the current pandemic on many people. People are shopping, accessing services, and connecting more within their local communities. These local economies and communities are vital. This also assists in promoting active travel and reducing longer journeys to tackle climate change and promote health. Economic policies must support local, neighbourhood shops and services and ensure that all neighbourhoods are accessible for disabled people and inclusive.

4. Accessible, safe, and inclusive transport

All forms of public transport are vital for many older and disabled people as well as people facing socio-economic disadvantage.

All forms of public transport must improve accessibility for all disabled people in Wales. This must include audio and visual information, unassisted access, and comprehensive training in access for disabled people, including learning disabled people and people with dementia.

Safety and fair treatment on public transport is a concern for many people across the protected characteristics. There must be

comprehensive training for all public transport staff on each protected characteristic group. This must include appropriate and inclusive treatment. Staff must be empowered and supported to challenge when customers experience discrimination or hate incidents on public transport.

Public transport must be frequent, reliable, and affordable.

When promoting active travel there must be full consideration of both cyclists and pedestrians. This must include disabled cyclists and pedestrians, including those who use walking aids or equipment, including wheelchair users, visually impaired people, Deaf people and people who use adapted cycles.

Design of roads, pavements and cycle ways must prioritise cycling and walking above driving in towns and cities. This prioritisation would enable design that reduces or removes conflict between pedestrians and cyclists, whilst ensuring safety for both. However, the fact that some disabled people rely on cars should also be recognised. As more people move to active travel more accessible parking spaces should be created and access routes preserved for disabled people.

Town and city centres should be carefully designed to ensure that street furniture and features do not present a barrier to disabled people. Public realm design must involve people representing the whole range of protected characteristics and people in Wales from the initial design stage.

5. Accessible and inclusive information

All public information must be written in everyday language as the standard format. This must include using at least 14 pt Sans Serif fonts, sparing use of bold, not using italics or underlining, and never using acronyms. Sector specific terms should also be avoided or explained.

Other accessible formats should be easy to request and quickly provided. This includes large print, Easy Read, audio, Braille, and community languages. This information must be in large print and include ways to request hard copy information by phone, text or post.

All public information should be thoroughly checked for inclusion, to ensure that culturally and religiously inappropriate language or

approaches are not used, LGBT+ people are not excluded, and gender and other bias is not present.

All public services in Wales should embed the BDA charter. Legislation should recognise and embrace BSL as an official language. This would place a duty on the public sector to provide services and information in BSL and provide a right to access services in BSL.

All online information and websites should meet the highest web accessibility standards. However, it should also be recognised that no website is fully accessible to everyone. Offline information and support is still required.

Digital exclusion is a significant barrier to accessing information and services. If information is not available offline many people become isolated and cannot access services or support. Public information must be available in hard copy and offline formats and widely distributed.

Programmes to address digital exclusion must be provided locally and tailored to the barriers experienced by different groups. Individual support should be easy to access.

Face-to-face engagement, once it is safe, is essential for many people. Not everyone can engage online. Additionally, many people who can and do engage online feel isolated if their only engagement with people is online. In person meetings, community groups, and events are vital to tackling isolation.

6. Positive action for increased representation of all under-represented groups and involvement of diverse people

Many groups of people are under-represented in politics and in civic society. Positive action should be taken to address under-representation of BAME, disabled, LGBT+, younger people and women in political life and elected office in Wales.

The recommendations from the review of the Diversity in Democracy programme must be fully implemented to address systemic barriers to increasing representation.

Specific mentoring and development schemes for different communities should be funded and delivered by third sector organisations to increase

diversity amongst elected members, public appointments, at senior levels in public and private sector organisations, and in civic society.

Public sector organisations should be required to implement positive action schemes to address under-representation in the workforce. This should include management training and mentoring schemes to address under-representation at senior levels.

All employers should have comprehensive equality and diversity training, including all protected characteristics and sub-groups. This should include unconscious bias training.

People representing the diversity of Wales across the protected characteristics should be directly involved in developing programmes and actions to address under-representation. This co-productive approach enables barriers to be identified and addressed and communities to share power.

Support to enter employment and progress in the workplace should be more flexible and encourage positive, innovative solutions through working with employers.

A public awareness campaign promoting positive stories and images of disabled, younger, older, BAME and LGBT people, women and people of faith succeeding in the workplace should be promoted in the media to address persistent negative perceptions and stories of employing under-represented groups.

Work placements in schools, colleges and universities should be more practical, longer, and provided in a wider variety of careers to enable young people to develop more skills and experience before entering the employment market.