

# Consultation on our proposed equality objectives for 2026-2030

December 2025



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# Foreword

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**We want to seek your views on our proposed equality objectives for 2026-2030 and the steps we intend to take to fulfil them. Please could you take some time to read this short consultation document and share your responses with us by 20 January 2026.**

**We are particularly keen to hear from people representing the interests of protected groups.**

We are currently working to prepare our next Strategic Equality Plan with equality objectives covering the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2030.

We published our current [Strategic Equality Plan](#) in September 2022, setting out the key things that we intended to do over the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2026 to help eliminate discrimination, promote equal opportunity and foster good relations in Wales.

In that time, we have made good progress in delivering a programme of work that helps us meet our legal duties and achieve our equality objectives. Progress made on delivering that programme of work has been reported each year in our annual equality reports. Our [Equality Report for 2024-25](#) was published in October 2025 and highlights meaningful and sustained action to embed equality, diversity, and inclusion across the organisation - from recruitment and staff support, including equality considerations in our audit work, through to our engagement with the public.

We are pleased with the progress we have made but recognise that there is still room for us to improve. As such, we have developed a revised suite of equality objectives which we believe should underpin our work for the next four years.

We propose to keep the four equality objectives from our current Plan. We feel they remain very relevant to our work and there is a need for us to take further work in those areas. We also propose to add another objective which emphasises the importance of fully embedding equality considerations in our internal decision making.

A key focus for us in preparing this consultation has been to review and summarise the steps that we intend to take to fulfil these five equality objectives over the next four years. Through that work, alongside the ongoing steps that we intend to continue to take and improve on, we have identified three additional, substantive steps that we believe will help us better perform the General Equality Duty.

Thank you for taking the time to read this short consultation document. We look forward to hearing from you.



**Adrian Crompton**

Auditor General for Wales



**Dr Ian Rees**

Chair, Wales Audit Office

## How to respond

Please respond by 20 January 2026.

Responses can be submitted via the webform or sent by email to:  
[info@audit.wales](mailto:info@audit.wales)

Or to the following address:

Planning and Reporting Team  
Audit Wales  
1 Capital Quarter  
Tyndall Street  
Cardiff  
CF10 4BZ

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay.

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

If you require this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us using the details provided below or by telephone on 029 2032 0500.

## Data protection

We process your personal data in accordance with data protection legislation, including the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We will hold your data securely in accordance with our Information Security and Documents and Records Management policies. Please view our [Privacy policy](#) for more information.

## Publication of responses

Information provided in response to this consultation may be published or disclosed in accordance with access to information legislation (chiefly the Freedom of Information Act 2000, but also data protection legislation, including the General Data Protection Regulation, and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want any information you provide to be treated as confidential, you should tell us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give any assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Auditor General or Audit Wales.

Personal data will be processed in accordance with data protection legislation. Where such data falls within the scope of a request for information from another person, the provisions of data protection legislation and the Freedom of Information Act will need to be considered in the particular circumstances. While no situation can be prejudged, this is likely to mean that information concerning senior officials and public figures is likely to be disclosed while the names and addresses of ordinary members of the public are likely to be withheld.

## Equality and Audit Wales

- 1 The Auditor General for Wales is the statutory external auditor of the Welsh public sector. The Auditor General is responsible for the audit of most of the public money spent in Wales.
- 2 The Wales Audit Office provides resources for the exercise of the Auditor General's functions and monitors and advises the Auditor General. The Wales Audit Office currently employs around 300 staff.
- 3 Together, as Audit Wales, we audit around £28 billion of income and expenditure. Our work supports the effective scrutiny of public money by the Senedd and locally elected representatives.
- 4 Our latest [Annual Plan](#) provides more detail on our overall strategy, the range of bodies that we audit, and how we follow the public pound in Wales.
- 5 The Auditor General's main functions involve examining and reporting on the stewardship of public money by Welsh public bodies. When undertaking this work, we consider how well public bodies are run and the effectiveness of the services they provide. In reporting on public bodies, and in making recommendations, the Auditor General is able to encourage beneficial changes in terms of equality.
- 6 The Wales Audit Office is committed to providing an inclusive work environment that values the diversity of all people, both our own staff and those with whom we come into contact during our work. We fully support the rights of people to be treated with dignity and respect.
- 7 As an employer of around 300 staff, the Wales Audit Office has a significant and direct impact on people in terms of equality. The Board recognises the importance of providing equal opportunity across the full range of employment factors, including recruitment, training, promotion, ways of working, and terms and conditions, including pay
- 8 Both the Auditor General and Wales Audit Office are required to follow the framework of protection against discrimination, harassment and victimisation and the public sector equality duties brought in by the Equality Act 2010 and related legislation. We also have a responsibility to uphold the rights set out in the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 9 As the Auditor General and the Wales Audit Office are separate legal entities, each are required to develop their own equality objectives. However, as we work together in the same organisation we have agreed to create a joint plan for Audit Wales.

## Our proposed equality objectives

- 10 To establish a revised suite of equality objectives, our Executive Leadership Team considered the following:
  - a. Whether existing objectives for which progress made had been assessed as effective should be removed from the list.
  - b. Whether any new objectives should be added to the list to reflect our current circumstances, with particular reference to our employment information analysed by equality characteristics, our strategic and operational risk registers, and the analysis of our operating environment as described in our Annual Plan for 2025-26.
- 11 The initial outcome of those discussions, following further consideration by the Wales Audit Office Board and Pawb, our staff equality interest group, is that we propose to retain the four equality objectives from our current Strategic Equality Plan. We feel those objectives remain very relevant to our work for the next four years and there is room for some further improvement in those areas.
- 12 We also propose adding a further objective which emphasises the importance of fully embedding equality considerations in our internal decision making.
- 13 A key focus for us in preparing this consultation has then been to review and summarise the steps that we intend take to fulfil these five equality objectives over the next four years.
- 14 Our five proposed equality objectives for 2026-2030 and the steps that we intend to continue to take and improve on to fulfil them are set out on the following pages.





# Objective 1

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**Ensure relevant and timely coverage is given to equality, diversity and inclusion matters in our programme of audit work**

## Why is this important?

- The Auditor General's work programme is regarded as influential in changing the policies and practices of public bodies.
- Through our audit work, we are keen to play our part in tackling inequality in Wales.

## What steps will we take under this objective?

- Tackling inequality will remain one of the key themes that underpins our forward work programme for performance audit.
- The Auditor General's Code of Audit Practice, alongside supporting guidance, will provide prescription for auditors on how to consider equality matters when undertaking local audit of accounts work, local performance audit work and national studies.
- During the planning of all individual national studies and local performance work, our audit teams will be required to consider where a particular audit might be relevant to tackling inequality and support the Auditor General in discharging his equality duties.
- We will consider whether public bodies are acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle so that they can contribute to the national well-being goals, including 'An Equal Wales', through their setting of well-being objectives and the steps they take to meet them.
- When undertaking studies, we will consider opportunities at appropriate stages to invite input from relevant representative bodies or directly from people affected.
- We will engage with The Equality and Human Rights Coalition – a network of third-sector organisations working in the equality and human rights field in Wales – to share information about our work programme and seek their views.
- Periodically, we will meet with colleagues from other external review bodies, including the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Wales, to help ensure we avoid placing unnecessary or duplicate demands on public and other bodies and enhance the collective impact of our work.
- We will keep track of actions taken in response to relevant audit recommendations.
- We will stay alert to opportunities to share audit learning on issues relevant to equality with wider audiences, including to inform policy development and scrutiny.

## Question 1a

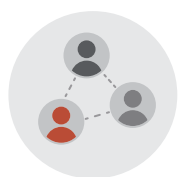
**Do you agree with this proposed equality objective?**

**It would be helpful if you could provide any supporting comments in the box below.**

## Question 1b

**Do you agree with the steps we intend to take to fulfil this objective?**

**It would be helpful if you could provide any supporting comments in the box below.**



## Objective 2

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### Better understand the diverse communication needs of our audiences and strengthen the accessibility of our outputs and messaging

#### Why is this important?

- In order to maximise the impact of our work, we must communicate clearly and accessibly with a range of audiences, taking account of specific needs and required adjustments.

#### What steps will we take under this objective?<sup>1</sup>

- We will seek advice and accreditation from external bodies that specialise in accessibility for people with protected characteristics.
- We will reflect on how well recent changes to our arrangements for preparing and designing audit reports are progressing, informed by staff and stakeholder feedback. The overall aim of these changes has been to make our reports shorter and easier to read, so that they better meet both our audience's accessibility needs and new audit quality requirements.
- A Digital Communication Officer will support staff across the organisation to ensure our outputs are accessible and meet the needs of various audiences.
- We will continue to develop and test our website accessibility against the updated [WCAG 2.2 website accessibility standard](#) - following assessment by the Government Digital Service (GDS), we have achieved the [GDS Standard for Accessibility](#).
- We will ensure all our reports are available in English and Welsh in line with the Welsh Language Standards.
- On a case-by-case basis, we will consider whether publication in other languages/formats would be appropriate for target audiences.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the activities noted under objective 1 are also relevant to this objective.

## Question 2a

**Do you agree with this proposed equality objective?**

**It would be helpful if you could provide any supporting comments in the box below.**

## Question 2b

**Do you agree with the steps we intend to take to fulfil this objective?**

**It would be helpful if you could provide any supporting comments in the box below.**



## Objective 3

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### Fully embed equality and human rights considerations in our internal planning and decision making

#### Why is this important?

- Embedding equality in decision-making leads to fairer outcomes, reduces discrimination, and fosters a more inclusive environment that benefits individuals and the organisation as a whole.
- We aspire to be a model organisation for the public sector in Wales and beyond.

#### What steps will we take under this objective?

- We will assign executive level sponsorship and oversight of this Plan with a link Board member to provide non-Executive scrutiny and support.
- We will take account of equality and human rights considerations as part of our arrangements for assessing the likely impact of internal policies and practices (revised or new).
- We will maintain a suite of questions that relate to equality within our overall staff survey, thereby generating ongoing insight on staff perceptions to inform decision making.
- We will seek and take account of the views of Pawb, our staff equality interest group, when:
  - Undertaking impact assessments of relevant policies and practices.
  - Reporting on progress made towards meeting our equality objectives.
  - Developing our annual staff survey.
  - Reviewing and revising our Strategic Equality Plan.
- When procuring services, we will:
  - Include requirements relevant to performance of our equality duties in our tender award criteria.
  - Comply with our equality duties when stipulating the performance standards to be included in contracts.
- We will undertake diversity monitoring and ongoing development of an interactive data tool which provides detail to decision makers on the diversity of our workforce and job applicants, and on our pay gaps.

### Question 3a

**Do you agree with this proposed equality objective?**

**It would be helpful if you could provide any supporting comments in the box below.**

### Question 3b

**Do you agree with the steps we intend to take to fulfil this objective?**

**It would be helpful if you could provide any supporting comments in the box below.**



## Objective 4

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**Attract and retain talented people from all walks of life, and ensure our workforce is more representative of the diversity of our communities in Wales**

### Why is this important?

- Attracting people from different backgrounds is likely to improve the quality of our work by bringing forward new ideas, perspectives and ways of working.
- An Audit Wales workforce that reflects the society it serves is more likely to be trusted and respected by the wider public.

### What steps will we take under this objective?<sup>2</sup>

- We will run inclusive annual recruitment campaigns for our graduate trainee and apprentice programmes.
- We will regularly review all recruitment campaigns to ensure fairness throughout our recruitment process.
- We will include 'individual storytelling' in our campaigns, showcasing diversity among the workforce and highlighting our range of benefits and the inclusive working environment.
- We will run training sessions for recruiting managers and others involved in the recruitment process, to ensure that consistent standards and processes are being applied.
- We will apply strict rules to ensure gender balance in our interview panels.
- We will take advantage of outreach opportunities to highlight Audit Wales as an inclusive employer and attract candidates from more disadvantaged and diverse communities.
- We will offer a Guaranteed Interview Scheme to applicants who consider themselves to have a disability and meet the essential requirements for advertised posts.

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2 Some of the activities noted under objective 3 are also relevant to this objective.

- We will continue to sign up to the Disability Confident Employer Scheme (currently Level 2 employer status).
- We will continue to secure accreditations and memberships with: Living Wage Employers, Working Families, Hidden Disabilities Sunflower, and Scope.
- We will run a number of projects to support all colleagues with their development and career growth, including an Aspiring Leadership programme and a Leading People and Projects course.
- We will continue to apply rigorous pay alignment arrangements to ensure jobs of equal worth are pay aligned.



## Question 4a

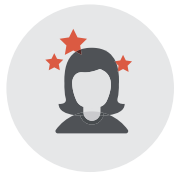
**Do you agree with this proposed equality objective?**

**It would be helpful if you could provide any supporting comments in the box below.**

## Question 4b

**Do you agree with the steps we intend to take to fulfil this objective?**

**It would be helpful if you could provide any supporting comments in the box below.**



## Objective 5

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**Embed a culture of inclusion, trust, and self-reflection, where everyone feels valued and respected**

### Why is this important?

- Individuals and teams are more likely to achieve their full potential and thrive in an organisation that includes people in a way that is fair for all, respects and values everyone's differences and empowers and enables each person to be themselves.

### What steps will we take under this objective?<sup>3</sup>

- We will apply a Dignity and Respect policy and an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy, which have both recently been reviewed under our impact assessment arrangements, including to take account of the new legal duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment and create a safe working environment.
- We will provide a recently refreshed mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training programme for all staff.
- We will provide a LinkedIn Learning Pathway to support continuous learning in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- We will support Pawb in ensuring effective engagement with employees representing the interests of protected groups.
- We will support Pawb members in acting as equality champions who are available for staff to raise concerns and share ideas on how our policies and practices can be improved.
- We will ensure better support for our existing relevant staff network groups through awareness raising, renewed focus and encouraging participation.
- We will continue to support a network of mental health first aiders and well-being champions who are all volunteers from inside the organisation.
- We will continue to provide access to a 24/7 employee assistance programme offering staff access to confidential counselling and emotional support when needed.
- Subject to operational requirements, we will support employees who wish to undertake related community or charity activities.

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<sup>3</sup> Some of the activities noted under objectives 3 and 4 are also relevant to this objective.

## Question 5a

**Do you agree with this proposed equality objective?**

**It would be helpful if you could provide any supporting comments in the box below.**


## Question 5b


**Do you agree with the steps we intend to take to fulfil this objective?**



**It would be helpful if you could provide any supporting comments in the box below.**

## Additional steps to help us better perform the General Equality Duty

- 15 Taking account of input from a cross-organisational working group and our staff equality interest group, Pawb, we propose to take three additional, substantive steps as part of our new Strategic Equality Plan for 2026-2030 to help us better perform the General Equality Duty.
- 16 A description of these additional steps, the rationale for taking each step, and the alignment of each step with our proposed equality objectives is set out in the table below.
- 17 Once finalised, these additional steps would form a particular focus for future oversight and monitoring by our Executive Leadership Team and Board over the course of the Plan period.

Proposed additional steps	Rationale for these additional steps	Alignment with equality objectives
<p><b>We will improve our approach to collecting and analysing diversity information from staff and job applicants. As part of this work, we will introduce the collection and analysis of socio-economic background data.</b></p>	<p>We currently collect and analyse data from staff and job applicants on protected and other equality characteristics to inform our strategic decision-making. We report externally on our workforce and job applicant diversity, and on our pay gaps, through an <u>interactive data tool</u> which accompanies our annual Equality Reports.</p> <p>While refinements have been made to our process for collecting data from new starters via a new onboarding system, there remains scope for further improvement. Through this additional step we aim to increase response rates and enhance the breadth and quality of data.</p> <p>In addition, we do not currently collect socio-economic background data for either our workforce or job applicants. This hinders our ability to act in the spirit of the <u>Socio-economic Duty</u>.</p>	 <p>Fully embed equality and human rights considerations in our internal planning and decision making</p>

Proposed additional steps	Rationale for these additional steps	Alignment with equality objectives
<b>We will tailor our outreach and recruitment approaches, with a focus on increasing representation in our workforce of individuals from ethnic minority communities, Welsh speaking backgrounds, and people with disabilities.</b>	<p>As reported in our recent <u>Equality Report 2024-25</u>, our ethnic minorities representation figure remains lower than the equivalent proportion of the Welsh population. While acknowledging that the data is sensitive to even small changes, our workforce ethnic minority representation remains a focus area.</p> <p>In addition, 10% of our employees currently record that they have a disability. By contrast, latest estimates from the Department for Work and Pensions' <u>Family Resources Survey</u> indicate that, for working-age adults, the proportion of disabled people in the UK is 24%.</p> <p>In our annual <u>Welsh Language Reports</u>, we have also indicated that we need to increase representation in our workforce of individuals from Welsh speaking backgrounds to be able to effectively deliver a bilingual audit service, in accordance with the <u>Welsh Language Standards</u>. There is some crossover in this area with our equality objectives since language is legally considered an aspect of the 'race' protected characteristic.</p>	 <p>Attract and retain talented people from all walks of life, and ensure our workforce is more representative of the diversity of our communities in Wales</p>

Proposed additional steps	Rationale for these additional steps	Alignment with equality objectives
<b>We will be proactive in taking account of equality considerations when exploring the potential use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This will include considerations such as privacy requirements, reasonable adjustments and informed consent.</b>	<p>We reported in our recent <u>Interim Report</u> that, since March 2025, Audit Wales has been running an initiative to explore the potential use of Microsoft Copilot in enhancing efficiency, productivity, and digital confidence across the organisation.</p> <p>Overall, several promising use cases have been identified for further exploration, subject to retaining human judgement and oversight. Provisional recommendations are for expansion to consider more opportunities to use AI in a controlled way to help enhance the productivity and efficiency of our work.</p> <p>AI is an area of rapid change with the potential to have significant impacts on how we work. The prospective use of functionality such as meeting transcription, processing of biometric data, and undertaking sentiment analysis need careful and ongoing consideration from an equality perspective.</p>	<div><p>Fully embed equality and human rights considerations in our internal planning and decision making</p></div> <div><p>Embed a culture of inclusion, trust, and self-reflection, where everyone feels valued and respected</p></div>

## Question 6

**Do you agree with the three additional steps we intend to take to help us better perform the General Equality Duty?**

**It would be helpful if you could provide any supporting comments in the box below.**

## Question 7

**Do you think we should include any other equality objectives and related steps in our plan for the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2030?**

**It would be helpful if you could provide any supporting comments in the box below.**

## Your Details

We would like to know a bit about you and your organisation. This will help give us additional context for your response. However, you are under no obligation to provide this information

Name and job title/role (where applicable):

Name of your organisation (where applicable):

Thank you for taking the time to respond.

Following this consultation, we will review all responses, with input from Pawb, and take them into consideration when preparing our next Strategic Equality Plan for publication in Spring 2026.





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telephone calls in Welsh and English.

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a  
galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg.