

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Staff Governance Committee
DATE	12 April 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan
REPORT NUMBER	RES/21/077
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TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.6

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the proposed approach to develop an equality, diversity and inclusion action plan for the Council taking account of the refreshed Equality Outcomes as agreed at Operational Delivery Committee on 11 March 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Committee agrees the approach to and implementation of the proposed equality, diversity and inclusion action plan for the Council as an employer.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Equality Outcomes

The Council's refreshed equality outcomes for 2021 – 2025 were approved by the Operational Delivery Committee on 11 March 2021. The agenda pack for this can be found [here](#). As part of these outcomes, there are two specific employer outcomes. These are:

Employer Outcome 1: Improve the diversity of our workforce and address any areas of underrepresentation¹, ensuring that there are equal opportunities for all protected groups² (with consideration for both internal employees and external applicants), with a particular and prioritised focus on age, disability, ethnicity / race and sex

Employer Outcome 2: Ensure that all of our employees who have protected characteristics feel fully valued, safe and included at work, with a particular and prioritised focus on age, disability, ethnicity / race, gender reassignment*, sex and sexual orientation

¹ **Underrepresentation:** Where there is a significant minority of one or more protected group within a particular team, cluster or function or at a particular level in the organisation. For example, this could include situations where a team has a much higher proportion of men than women. This is in comparison to community and other workforce data.

² **Protected groups / protected characteristics:** These are defined by the Equality Act (2010) and cover sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment*, race / ethnicity, faith & religion (incl. belief and non-belief), pregnancy & maternity, and marriage & civil partnership. Protected groups or those with protected characteristics are those who are covered by the Equality Act (2010) under one of those categories.

*We acknowledge that this terminology may be considered outdated, and 'Trans' is the umbrella term. However, since the outcomes are in response to the current Equality Act, the existing terminology has been retained.

Further information on how these equality outcomes were developed can be found in sections 3.6 – 3.9 of this report.

3.2 To achieve these outcomes, an action plan has been developed to set out the Council's detailed approach to equality, diversity and inclusion as an employer.

3.3 **Current and Ongoing Work**

The Council already undertakes a range of positive work to support equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Much of this work will continue to support the achievement of the above outcomes. Details of this work can be found in **Appendix 1** to this report.

3.4 **Strategic Drivers, Council Accreditations, Duties and Pledges**

3.4.1 The Council has a number of strategic drivers, accreditations, duties and pledges each of which have key requirements that impact on its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. These contribute to and demonstrate its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace and include the following:

3.4.2 **Guiding Principles**

Work on equality, diversity and inclusion fits with and supports the organisation's Guiding Principles which guide the way employees work and the way employees behave with each other, particularly:

Team: "Everyone belongs – we create a good team spirit – no-one's left behind – we include everyone"

Value: "We treat people with dignity and respect – we're all equal – we're all people"

3.4.3 Workforce Plan

3.4.3.1 Work on equality, diversity and inclusion fits with and supports the organisation's Workforce Plan. The agenda pack with the Workforce Plan is found [here](#). This Workforce Plan was created to shift the organisation's culture to align with the Guiding Principles, while at the same time developing individual and organisational behaviours, skills and knowledge that will deliver the organisational capabilities required. One of these organisational capabilities is "encouraging inclusiveness, engagement and collaboration" which is a strong focus of the equality, diversity and inclusion action plan.

3.4.3.2 The Workforce Plan places importance on workforce diversity. The plan states that it is crucial that the Council places an increased focus on creating an environment where equality and diversity is valued and that it fosters a working environment that encourages diversity of thought, perspective and background as well as being an employer of choice and promoting inclusivity for all.

3.4.3.2 A strong focus of the Workforce Plan is the organisation's multi-generational workforce and developing the organisation's young workforce. This requires attention to different expectations of work and workplaces as well as focusing on succession planning to facilitate progression and knowledge and skill-sharing throughout the organisation between different generations.

3.4.4 Equally Safe at Work

3.4.4.1 The Council undertook a one-year pilot employer accreditation programme called 'Equally Safe at Work', concerned with gender equality and violence against women. The aim of the programme is to support employers in reviewing workplace culture and ensuring that policies and practices are enhanced to address the barriers that women face at work. There are six standards under the programme: Leadership, Data, Flexible Working, Occupational Segregation, Workplace Culture and Violence Against Women, with a set of criteria to meet under each. The programme required the Council to undertake a range of activities including awareness raising, surveying staff, training and reviewing policies, procedures, and practices.

3.4.4.2 It was recently announced by 'Close the Gap', the organisation overseeing the programme, that the Council was successful in attaining the accreditation at the Bronze level. This began on 9 March 2021 and will last for a two-year period until 8 March 2023, at which point a review will be undertaken by 'Close the Gap' to confirm that the Council is still meeting the criteria. Consideration will also be given as to whether the Council wishes to progress further with the programme to try to attain the Silver level of the accreditation.

3.4.5 Investors in Young People

3.4.5.1 The Investors in Young People (IYYP) framework was developed to support organisations to develop and improve youth employment practices and seeks to reward and recognise employers who demonstrate excellence in recruiting and retaining young people, while encouraging others to begin working with young people. There are 3 levels of accreditation, Standard, Silver and Gold.

3.4.5.2 In March 2020, following a comprehensive assessment, the Council was awarded the IYP Good Practice Award Gold Standard (a significant improvement on our existing Standard level).

3.4.5.3 Achievement of this award demonstrates our commitment to ensuring the attraction, recruitment, selection, integration, development and progression of young people to consider the Council as an employer of choice and its young employees within our workforce. It also aligns to the Council's agreed Workforce Plan where developing the young workforce is a key area of focus in terms of future workforce capacity.

3.4.6 **Disability Confident Employer**

3.4.6.1 The Council holds the Disability Confident Employer (Level 2) accreditation. As part of this accreditation the Council has a commitment to supporting people with disabilities in all of its employment-related activity. To achieve and maintain this accreditation, the Council needs to demonstrate ongoing work around two themes. The first is 'getting the right people for your business'. The second theme is 'keeping and developing your people'. There are several core and specific actions that the organisation needs to demonstrate for this accreditation.

3.4.7 **Carer Positive Engaged Employer**

3.4.7.1 This accreditation is given to employers who create a supportive working environment for carers in the workplace where they feel valued. There are several criteria for this accreditation including a process for identifying carers, having a policy which supports carers, offering workplace support to carers, raising awareness of carers and providing training for them, and offering peer-to-peer support.

3.4.8 **Public Sector Equality Duty**

3.4.8.1 The Equality Act (2010) places [a duty](#) on public authorities to have due regard to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Fostering good relations between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not

3.4.9 **Fairer Scotland Duty**

3.4.9.1 Under the [Fairer Scotland Duty](#), public bodies must actively consider / pay due regard to how to reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage.

3.4.10 Fast Track Cities

3.4.10.1 In 2019, Aberdeen City Council pledged its support for the Fast Track Cities initiative as part of a global focus on HIV prevention, diagnosis and treatment. This initiative includes a focus on reducing the stigma in society around HIV.

3.5 Additional Equality Initiatives

3.5.1 Following the publication of the Scottish Parliament's Equality and Human Rights Committee's report – [Race Equality, Employment and Skills: Making Progress?](#), the Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills has written to advise of certain actions that the Committee has recommended public authorities should take to address inequalities associated with race. These are:

- Those in public authority leadership positions undertake an assessment of their organisation's understanding of racism and the structural barriers that may exist within their organisations. Public authorities should integrate their ambitions into their next strategic plan. Their strategic goal should be underpinned by specific outcomes and supported by timely monitoring. Public authorities should be transparent about their targets and their progress in delivering their outcomes.
- Public authorities should review their recruitment procedures and practice against the [Scottish Government's minority ethnic recruitment toolkit](#) and make the necessary changes.
- Public authorities subject to the Scottish specific Public Sector Equality Duty should, as a minimum, voluntarily record and publish their ethnicity pay gap and produce an action plan to deliver identified outcomes.
- Each public authority is asked to provide a commitment with a minimum of three new actions to address their organisation's specific issues along with associated timescales and reasons for those timescales

3.5.2 The [Scottish Government's Race Equality Framework 2016 – 2030](#) states, as a goal, that "minority ethnic people have equal, fair and proportionate access to employment and representation at all levels, grades and occupation types in Scotland's workforce and experience fewer labour market, workplace and income inequalities".

3.5.3 The Scottish Government signed up to The Sustainable Development Goals (STG), also known as [Global Goals](#) in 2015. These are designed to be a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. These goals are under consideration for the Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan refresh, with many areas around the world 'localising' the goals and bringing them into their visions and strategies. Two particular goals are of relevance to our employer outcomes. STG5 aims 'to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'. STG10 seeks 'to reduce inequality within and among countries'.

3.6 Relevant Research

As part of the development of the outcomes and action plan, recent research and information was reviewed. This research included a survey conducted by Aberdeen City Council and Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC) as well as by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, the Scottish Government, the Fawcett Society and Youth Link Scotland. Relevant research information is presented in **Appendix 1**.

3.7 Workforce Diversity Data Analysis

An analysis of the latest workforce diversity statistics was reviewed to support the focus of the Council's equality outcomes and action plan, specifically to identify areas of particular and prioritised focus. Relevant workforce data can be found in the mainstreaming report presented to the Operational Delivery Committee on 11th March 2021. The agenda pack for this is found [here](#).

3.8 Engagement

3.8.1 As part of the development of the outcomes and action plan, significant engagement has taken place with employees and employee groups across the Council. This has resulted in contributions, suggestions and feedback from the Equality Ambassadors Network, the Young Employee Network as well as groups of employees in teams representing a range of Council services and roles.

3.8.3 Trade Union colleagues have also been engaged with throughout the process.

3.8.4 The proposed action plan was also sent to Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC) for comment, advice and feedback.

3.8.5 In addition, communications about the proposed outcomes and action plan were added to the Intranet enabling employees to directly provide feedback on a confidential basis, to a dedicated Officer in People and Organisational Development, and seeking individuals to be further involved in both the action plan and ongoing work.

3.9 Benchmarking

3.9.1 Benchmarking information on employment equality outcomes was obtained in relation to 27 other Scottish Local Authorities. This related to outcomes set in 2017 for the last four-year period up to 2021. These were closely examined to identify the specific employment equality issues other councils had focused on in that period.

3.9.2 The benchmarking exercise found that outcomes differed widely across authorities, reflecting the employment equality priorities of each council at the time. It has been helpful in determining our revised employment equality outcomes, having been used in conjunction with the other evidence gathered and feedback from the engagement sessions.

3.10 Proposed Action List

3.10.1. In order to achieve our Equality Outcomes, a suggested action list for each outcome has been developed, in line with research, employee engagement and the Council's accreditations, duties and pledges. However, as outlined in section 3.8.1 of this report, it is important that ongoing active listening takes place and protected groups are involved as much as possible into the design and implementation of actions. Furthermore, there is a need to be flexible and adaptable to accommodate future needs and developments.

The suggested action list can be found in **Appendix 1**.

3.10.2 Proposed Timeline and Plan for Ongoing Engagement and Delivery

May 2021 – A series of working groups will be created to focus on grouped actions, with a Lead Officer from People and Organisational Development. An initial meeting of working groups will be held to discuss general plans of action. These meetings should continue on a bi-monthly basis and Lead Officers will meet on a regular basis to ensure consistency, to consider any intersectionality, and to prevent any duplication of work. A wider programme document will be created to capture all data / action plans / milestones / RAG status.

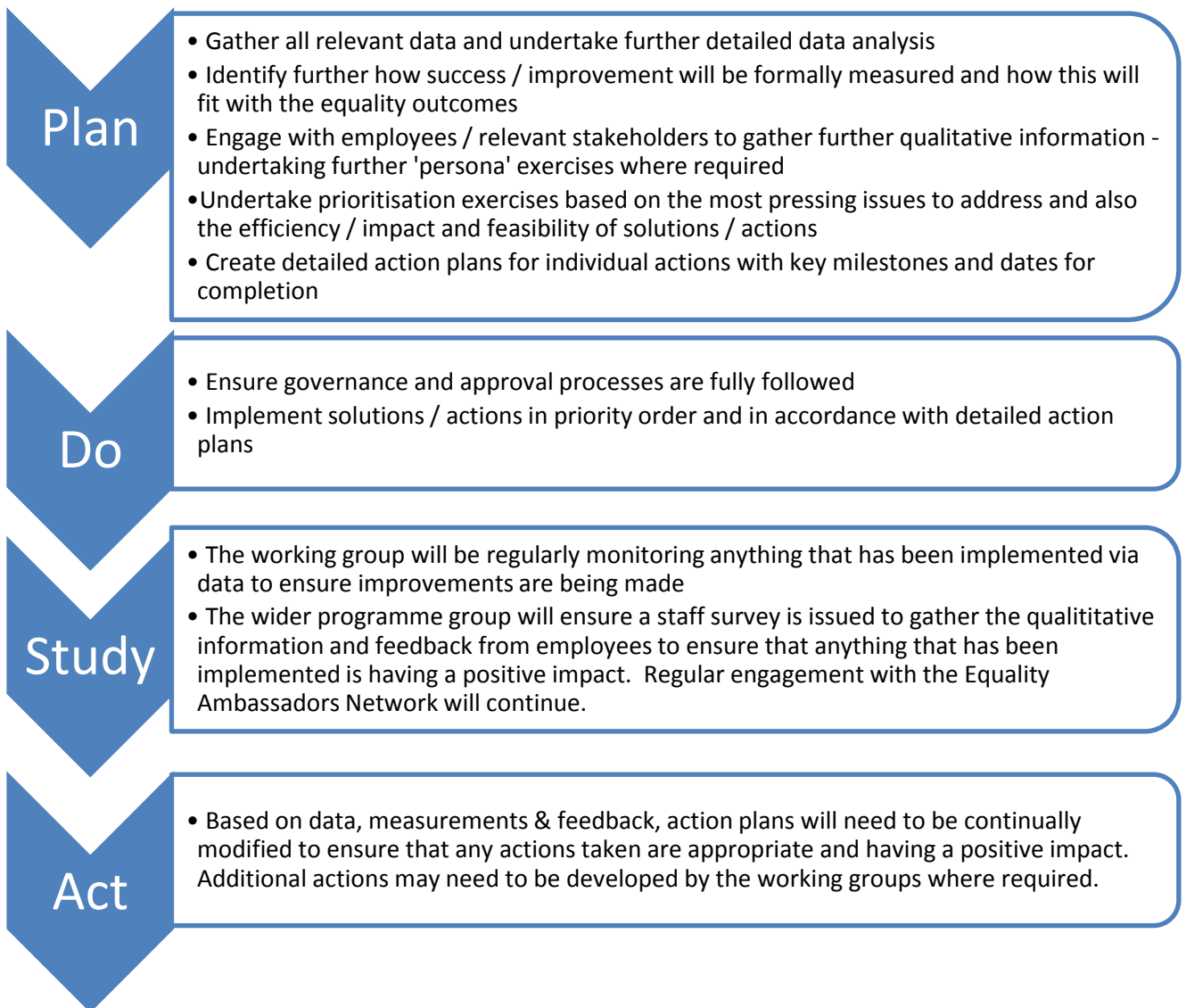
May 2021 – August / September 2021 – Each working group will follow the 'Plan Do Study Act' (PDSA) cycle outlined in the diagram below with completion of the 'plan' phase by August / September 2021.

September 2021 onwards – Each working group will begin the next phases based on their detailed action plans. Each working group will be prioritising actions and interventions and will provide individual timelines and milestones.

It is worth noting that the action plan is intentionally flexible to allow for active listening to employees as well as ensure that actions can be amended and added where required if further needs are identified.

Annually – Longer-term data review will need to be undertaken to monitor and review wider workforce diversity statistics to identify trends and improvements. On an annual basis, progress on the action plan will be included within service updates for Committee with a full review and detailed update provided after two years via Committee report. The equality outcomes last for four years so this will mark the halfway point of this. This will also allow time for any trends to be fully identifiable and analysed.

3.10.3 The below diagram outlines the steps each working group will take to take forward actions, ensuring that the work undertaken is data-led and has full employee engagement. It will also ensure that the action plan allows for ongoing listening and feedback.



4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Some spend will be required on training and development as well as promotional and printed material where required to ensure messages and initiatives reach all employees and future talent. This will be funded by the Corporate Training budget held within People and Organisational Development.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This action plan will ensure the Council maintains compliance with its duties under the Equality Act (2010).

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	None	L	None
Compliance	As an employer, there could be a risk of not meeting statutory equality duties.	L	Development of a comprehensive equality, diversity and action plan.
Operational	None	L	None
Financial	There could be required spend for training as well as promotional and printed material.	L	This spending will be covered by the agreed corporate training budget held within People and Organisational Development.
Reputational	As an employer, there could be a perception that we are not an employer of choice or a fair and inclusive employer.	L	Development of a comprehensive equality, diversity and action plan.
Environment / Climate	None	L	None

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the first two parts of policy statement 7 under ‘People’:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the implementation of Developing the Young Workforce, seek to gain the highest level of investors in young people accreditation and ensure there is a focus on supporting pupils excel in STEM subjects
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of Economy Stretch Outcome 1 and 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors by 2026. This includes social care. Key driver 1.2 is

	<p>'developing the talent and future workforce necessary to support diversification of business & economy'. This includes employability activity and progressing the Council's Investors in Young People Programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% of working people in living wage employment by 2026. Key driver 2.1 is 'promoting inclusive economic growth for our most disadvantaged communities'. This includes support for young people as well as people progressing positively through the employability pipeline.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of People Stretch Outcome 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 95% of children living in our priority localities will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026. <p>The key drivers for this outcome are:</p> <p>6.1 Improving pathways to education, employment and training for identified groups (including Care Experienced Young People and those with Additional Support Needs)</p> <p>6.2 Supporting young people, families, carers and communities to better understand the opportunities available to their children upon leaving school</p> <p>6.3 Ensuring children, young people and families understand the pathways available to them and skills required for future</p>
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	The proposals within this report support the Council's ongoing compliance with the Equality Act (2010).

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Full impact assessment required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Agenda pack which includes the Mainstreaming Equality Report and Equality Outcomes](#)

[Agenda pack which includes the Workforce Plan](#)

[Joint Survey by ACC and Grampian Regional Equality Council \(GREC\) Summary of Findings](#)

[Equality and Human Rights Commission, 'Is Scotland Fairer' \(2018\)](#)

[Scottish Government Research, 'Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): impact on equality](#)

[Youth Link Scotland Survey Response Document](#)

[Fawcett Society Equal Pay Day Report \(2020\)](#)

[Equality and Human Rights Commission Public Sector Equality Duty](#)

[Fairer Scotland Duty](#)

[Scottish Parliament, 'Race Equality, Employment and Skills: Making Progress?' \(2020\)](#)

[Scottish Government, Minority ethnic recruitment toolkit](#)

[Scottish Government, Race equality framework for Scotland 2016 to 2030](#)

[The Global Goals for Sustainable Development](#)

[CIPD and Equality and Human Rights Commission, Unconscious Bias Training: An Assessment of the Effectiveness for Evidence \(2018\)](#)

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Suggested equality, diversity and inclusion action list and ongoing work

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