

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Staff Governance Committee
DATE	25 August 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Employee Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2025-2029
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/25/109
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Isla Newcombe
REPORT AUTHOR	Baldeep McGarry and Alison Paterson
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.6

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report presents Aberdeen City Council's Employee Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2025-2029.
- 1.2 The report sets out how the action plan has been developed to support the council's Equality Outcomes as an Employer.
- 1.3 The Equality Outcomes and action plan are key elements in delivering the council's strategic priorities by strengthening alignment with current and changing legislative duties under the Equality Act 2010.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Notes the approach to and implementation of the proposed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2025-2029;
- 2.2 Notes that officers will continue to engage with Employees and Trade Unions and incorporate changes to the action plan as required; and
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer – People and Citizen Services to report to Anti-Poverty and Inequality committee on progress against the action plan, in line with relevant statutory deadlines and to present an update to the Staff Governance Committee regarding any impacts this report has on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, including any changes, updates, or new areas of focus identified through available data and analysis.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Public Sector Specific Duties

- 3.1.1 The [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) came into force across Great Britain on 5 April 2011. It means that public bodies have to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.
- 3.1.2 The [Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#) outline specific duties for public authorities in Scotland, including requirements for data gathering, producing mainstreaming reports, and publishing employee information in a manner that is accessible.
- 3.1.3 The council's previous set of outcomes for 2021-25 were approved on [11th March 2021](#) and a [progress report](#) was presented to the Staff Governance Committee on 13th March 2023 as per the requirement under Scottish Specific Duties.
- 3.1.4 The new set of proposed Equalities Outcomes were approved by the Council's Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee in March 2025 as part of the [Equalities Outcomes Mainstreaming Report](#) 2021-2025. These were presented alongside key and statutory data sets.

3.2 Employer Outcomes and the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Plan

The new outcomes included two outcomes specific to Aberdeen City Council as an employer.

Employer Outcome 1: Our workforce is as diverse and representative as the city we serve, with a focus on sex, disability, race and sexual orientation.

Rationale: Along with the feedback from our employee equality groups and the employee experience survey, we considered census data, and our internal staffing reports. Our aim is to ensure our workforce is diverse and representative of all protected characteristics. This outcome and underpinning actions and activity in the plan will help us achieve a diverse workforce, improve representation and enhance productivity and skills.

Employer Outcome 2: People with protected characteristics feel their voice and experience is heard, valued and helps shape decisions that affect them.

Rationale: Our drive is to improve value and respect within our workforce and build on our existing positive culture. There is an increasing awareness of the need to engage those with lived experience and emphasise inclusive communication. Delivering this outcome will improve employee participation and informed decision making.

The Council already undertakes a range of diverse activity to support equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Much of this work will continue to support the achievement of the above refreshed outcomes.

- 3.2.1 To achieve the outcomes, the action plan has been developed to set out the Council's detailed approach to equality, diversity and inclusion as an employer. The Action Plan can be viewed in **Appendix 1** and details the activities, timelines and responsibility of actions.

3.3 Developing the Action Plan

The outcomes, underlying actions and indicators have been identified based on:

- 3.3.1 A review of the previous outcomes and action plan. 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 the [Report](#) presented to committee.
- 3.3.2 A series of online and in-person consultation and engagement sessions were held with the Equality Ambassadors Network and the Employee Equality working groups. Feedback has been used to shape the actions within the plan to ensure there is a staff-led and evidence-based approach throughout the duration of the plan.
- 3.3.3 Workforce diversity data was also reviewed to develop the focus of the Council's equality outcomes and action plan, specifically to identify areas of prioritised focus. The workforce data was presented as part of the progress report and can be accessed in the [Agenda Pack](#).
- 3.3.4 Results of the Employee Experience Survey, which had a specific section on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion were reviewed to understand where further focus is needed. The data was further analysed by protected characteristics to identify trends in responses and ensure outcomes and actions would benefit any such groups to improve representation, engagement and participation for an inclusive workplace culture.
- 3.3.5 The review of the feedback provided as part of a recent Employee Experience survey highlights that Aberdeen City Council demonstrates a commitment to promoting diversity, and focus must continue with efforts to improve awareness, engagement, and accessibility to ensure all employees can fully participate in and benefit from equality initiatives. These needs have been reflected in the outcomes and underpinning action plan.
- 3.3.6 Key highlights by protected characteristics in the survey responses included:
 - Overall, the results highlighted that the council has a positive approach to inclusion, with very low numbers of 4% or less of respondents, who expressed negative views about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Council.
 - Employees from¹Ethnic minority groups tend to have a more positive perception of the council's efforts in promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion compared to White employees.

¹ We use 'ethnic minorities' to refer to all ethnic groups except the White British group. Ethnic minorities include White minorities. White ethnic minority groups included in this category are Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Scottish Gypsy / Traveller, and White people from any country outside the UK and Ireland, including European countries. Source: [Writing about ethnicity - GOV.UK](#)

- Due to lower completion rates on Religion and Race, results highlighted differences where some religious groups had a higher completion rate and favourable responses which have been treated with caution as they are not fully representative of the diverse workforce. The general perception of adequate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training for employees is highly positive by religious groups.
- Overall, females reported marginally higher agreement percentages than males, particularly with respect to equal opportunities and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training. Conversely, whilst both groups demonstrated lower levels of agreement on topics such as awareness of Equality Ambassadors and access to equalities activities, with males showing a slightly more positive response.
- Overall, the levels of agreement vary across age groups, with younger employees generally being more neutral or less in agreement, while middle-aged and older employees show higher levels of agreement on various topics related to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

3.3.7 Extensive consultation was undertaken through our employee groups and combined with insights from the recent Employee Experience Survey highlighted what we were doing well in creating an inclusive work environment and where we can do better.

3.3.8 Data on Aberdeen city's population listed by protected characteristics was used to compare against our current workforce demographics to identify gaps, trends and set baselines to meet our equality outcomes. Improvements have been identified around gathering quality data which will then better inform decisions we make and the activities we undertake in relation to our workforce.

3.3.9 Through the identification of underrepresented groups by demographical data, the initiatives in the plan aim to address these gaps through targeted recruitment, retention and development initiatives.

3.3.10 Focus groups were held to further explore trends in the responses to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion questions within the Employee Experience Survey with the aim to explore the reasons for a higher level of neutral response rates.

3.3.11 The focus group participants shared that neutrality (in survey responses) is not necessarily negative and that it may be due to a lower level of direct experience in initiatives.

3.3.12 Focus groups highlighted that while there is awareness of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives, it is higher among those involved in relevant groups and day to day visibility may be limited for others.

3.3.13 Comfort in discussing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion topics varies, and such discussions are not common in day-to-day team interactions unless directly relevant to the work highlighting the need to do more on how we communicate to improve awareness and participation.

- 3.3.14 Within these focus groups, employees have shared views, experiences and solutions which have been added to the action plan and will be continually reviewed.
- 3.3.15 A focused session with our diverse group of Aspiring Leaders also helped develop actions from the perspective of aspiring future senior leaders.
- 3.3.16 Through close collaboration with Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC), sessions were facilitated within communities to understand any barriers, identify actions and priorities to promote Aberdeen City Council as an attractive employer of choice, and offer further focussed training for the development of our existing employers.
- 3.3.17 Guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission on setting new outcomes and how to meet the Equality duty states that by focusing on outcomes rather than objectives, the duty aims to bring practical improvements in the life chances of those who experience discrimination and disadvantage. Feedback from the survey and focus groups has ensured that the voice and experience of our workforce is reflected in the plan.
- 3.3.18 Guidance from the Equally Safe at Work programme, which recommends six thematic standards that must be met to achieve and retain accreditation, has been included in the action plan as part of identified themes and areas to develop. These are:
- Leadership
 - Data
 - Flexible working
 - Occupational Segregation
 - Workplace culture
 - Violence Against Women (VAW)
- 3.3.19 Guidance from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), has also been considered which highlights a focus on leadership commitment, data driven approaches, inclusive recruitment and cultures, accountability, engagement and review.
- 3.3.20 Legislative requirements to meet the needs of the General Duty under the Equality Act 2010 have also been at the centre of the action plan, to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - Advance equality of opportunity
 - Foster good relations between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

Under the [Fairer Scotland Duty](#), public bodies must actively consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions.

- 3.3.21 Requirements of the council's strategic drivers, accreditations, duties and pledges have also been used to inform and develop activities within the action

plan to meet the requirements set out in the various plans with a focus on equality, diversity and inclusion.

3.3.22 Trade Union colleagues have been engaged with through the process of setting the new outcomes and developing the action plan. A positive outcome of this engagement has resulted in an invitation to the Equalities Team to provide regular equality, diversity and inclusion related updates at their group meetings.

3.3.23 The proposed actions in the plan were also developed with the advice and feedback from our partners at Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC).

3.4 From the analysis of the data sources listed above, common themes were identified that support both employee outcomes. These themes have been used as the structure for the action plan. The themes below closely align with the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) guidance on areas to focus on when aiming to improve representation and inclusion which include:

- Leadership and Management
- Data
- Learning and Development
- Policies and Practices
- Recruitment, Selection and Retention
- Consultation and Engagement
- Communication and awareness-raising

3.5 Other Council Plans

3.5.1 The Employee Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action plan intersects other Council plans, principles and policies to provide a holistic approach to equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace: These include:

3.5.2 **Guiding Principles** - Our Guiding Principles were designed by our staff and strengthen our commitment to creating the kind of culture that our employees say they want, with associated capabilities to support our workforce with the right tools and support to carry out their roles which then supports their awareness of their responsibility and duty to deliver fair and equitable services to our citizens. These principles are rooted in a collective commitment to creating a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable workforce. Since 2023, we have had a capability framework for employees that is aligned to our Guiding Principles, and a specific core capability for employees that sets out the necessity duty for all employees to have awareness, skills and behaviours around equality, diversity and inclusion.



3.5.2 Workforce Plan - The plan sets out how we will ensure our current and future workforce has the capacity and capability to support our working culture. The Plan links to and supports our organisational capabilities and Guiding Principles. This includes setting out the wider actions and innovative practices being taken to address current challenges through attracting, recruiting and moving talent, developing future workforce capacity, and mitigating risks in relation to service delivery. The Workforce Plan will take account of the changing external and internal environment for example, in relation to equalities the Scottish Government Equality Framework and Action Plan and the Employer Equality Outcomes 2025 – 2029 as well as key government policy drivers and upcoming legislative changes.

3.5.3 Council Delivery Plan - The [delivery plan](#) sets out key legislation and frameworks that the council works to at national and local levels. As part of People and Citizen Services, the commitment is to implement a new flexible working policy which, alongside the statutory right to request flexible working, will provide greater flexibility for employees and bring benefits including improved work-life balance, increased morale and aid recruitment and retention.

3.5.4 Accreditations and Pledges - The Council is proud to have a number of accreditations and pledges in place. Many of these relate to one or more protected characteristic. These Accreditations and Pledges are promoted on the MyJobScotland website (where we advertise our vacancies), our website and part of the recruitment and selection training provided to recruiting managers. These include, Young Persons Guarantee Employer aimed at building a workforce for the future with the right people, skills and experience, Disability Confident Employer Living Wage Employer, Carers Positive, and Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award.

- The Council has recently achieved bronze level re-accreditation in the Equally Safe at Work programme which aims 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 thematic standards under the programme which have been listed in section 3.3.9 of this report. A range of activities to maintain and further progress on the accreditation have also been absorbed into the action plan.
- The Council has recently renewed its 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 must demonstrate core and specific actions to maintain the accreditation. Actions to support the accreditation have also been included in the action plan.

- 3.6** The action plan will also be updated to reflect any legislative changes and requirements following formal guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission in relation to the Equality Act 2010.

3.7 Next Steps

- 3.7.1 Following presentation to committee, the Action Plan will be officially launched via the internal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Hub with a follow up launch on the Equality Ambassadors Network to promote awareness and increase the participation of our employees.
- 3.7.2 Data and analysis will be regularly carried out by the delivery leads identified in the Action Plan to determine priorities, areas of further action and map progress against actions which will be reported in the next statutory progress report in April 2027.
- 3.7.3 The Action Plan will remain a 'live' document and actions will be adjusted and adapted based on current needs, data and direct feedback from employees, Trade Unions and protected groups.
- 3.7.4 Any changes, updates or new areas of focus based on the data and analysis from the Equality Outcomes Mainstreaming Progress Report will be highlighted and shared through a future meeting of the Staff Governance Committee.
- 3.7.5 Following the approval of the last action plan, a number of working groups were established to progress the actions within the plan and were reported on in the [Equalities Outcomes Mainstreaming Report](#). The Equality Ambassadors Network and Employee Equality working groups will be refreshed to support the delivery of the new action plan.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There will be anticipated costs around training and development which will be funded through the existing People and Citizen Services budget. Additional costs may also be incurred in producing accessible information and material to support Equality, Diversity and Inclusion campaigns to make reasonable adjustments.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This action plan will ensure the Council maintains compliance with its duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty (General Duty) contained within the Equality Act 2010 to pay due regard when exercising its functions to:
- eliminating discrimination, harassment, and victimisation,
 - advancing equality of opportunity,

- fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	None	None	L	Yes
Compliance	As an employer, there could be a risk of not meeting statutory equality duties.	Development of a comprehensive equality, diversity and action plan co-developed with employees.	L	Yes
Operational	None	None	L	Yes
Financial	Some financial requirements to deliver on training and development and creation of inclusive campaigns.	This spending will be covered by the agreed corporate training budget held within People and Citizens.	L	Yes
Reputational	As an employer, there could be a perception that we are not an employer of choice or a fair and inclusive employer.	Development of a comprehensive equality, diversity and action plan co-developed with employees.		Yes
Environment / Climate	None	None	L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

Council Delivery Plan 2024	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspect of the policy statement:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise that the Council depends upon its staff to deliver the services it provides and believe the Council must properly reward, train and support its staff. • Engage regularly with staff and trade union representatives.
Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this action plan support the delivery of Economy Stretch Outcomes:</p> <p>2. 74% employment rate for Aberdeen City by 2026</p> <p>2.1 Support 25 people from ethnic minorities into sustained, good quality employment by 2026.</p> <p>2.4 Support 100 people into sustained, good quality employment by 2026, with a particular focus on those from priority neighbourhoods and people over 50.</p> <p>2.6 Support 40 young parents into training and / or employability provision by 2026</p> <p>2.7 Upskill 50 individuals who are experiencing digital barriers to apply for employment opportunities by 2026.</p>
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>6. 95% of all children living in our priority neighbourhoods (Quintiles 1 & 2), will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving pathways to education, employment and training for all our children. • Increase the % of learners entering a positive and sustained destination to be ahead of the Virtual Comparator for all groups by 2025
Regional and City Strategies	<p>Through the Regional Economic Strategy workforce strategies to improve support for young people, high attainment, meaningful progression and employment opportunities that, in turn, fulfil the economic needs of the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting inclusive growth at the heart of public sector investment, maximise opportunities for targeted recruitment and

	training activity for all potential procurement spend through community benefit clause The activities listed in this report also enhance the Regional, City and Council strategies through the completion of Integrated Impact Assessments and ensuring that considerations and mitigations are made for those with protected characteristics.
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9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
Data Protection Impact Assessment	A DPIA is not required for the action plan but was completed for the employee experience survey.
Other	None

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 [Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2021-2025.pdf](#)
- 10.2 [CommitteeReport_EDIpolicy_SGC_April2024_FINALDEADLINE.pdf](#)
- 10.3 [Final Workforce Delivery Plan.pdf](#)
- 10.4 [Diversity+in+Recruitment+Update.pdf](#)
- 10.5 [Equality and Human Rights Public Sector Equality Duty](#)
- 10.6 [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace - CIPD](#)

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1: Employee Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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