

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 11 March 2025

Equality Policy - Workforce

Executive/routine
Wards

1. Recommendations

1.1 To approve the new Equality Policy for all colleagues.

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Executive Director Corporate Services

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Equality Policy - Workforce

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The current Equality and Diversity policy was approved in August 2017. Since then, we have made a number of public commitments to our workforce including:-
- introduction of Our Behaviours
 - new People Strategy 2024 to 2027
 - co-creation of an anti-racist action plan for the organisation
 - becoming a Stonewall Diversity Champion
 - working towards Bronze accreditation for Equally Safe at Work.
- 2.2 Each of these commitments contributes to the achievement of a workplace culture that's open, positive, inclusive and safe for all. The new Equality Policy – Workforce has been developed to reflect these commitments and underpin the positive workplace culture we're working to achieve consistently across the organisation.

3. Background

- 3.1 There have been significant changes since 2017 in how we mainstream equality in the working environment for our colleagues. Our public commitments are key enablers in creating the culture change required and prompt the need to review and update our Equality Policy for our workforce.
- 3.2 It was agreed in May 2023 to sign up to the Stonewall Diversity Champion's Programme and participate in the UK Workplace Equality Index. Part of the requirement of the Workplace Index is to ensure our policies provide clarity and support to all LGBTQ+ colleagues and that their language and content give confidence of our commitment to an inclusive working environment for all our LGBTQ+ community.
- 3.3 In May 2023 the Council also decided to become an Equally Safe at Work accredited employer. Close the Gap formally accepted the Council application to join the programme from 5 August 2024. Part of the Bronze accreditation requirement is to review our Equality Policy for the workforce and ensure that specific information is included in respect of:-

- occupational segregation
- violence against women
- sexism
- the link between women's labour market inequality, violence against women and wider gender inequality
- the employer role in preventing violence against women
- intersectionality

3.4 May 2023 also saw the launch of Our Behaviours of Respect, Integrity and Flexibility. Our Behaviours are the foundation for driving positive change and inclusive practice in our workplace. A commitment was made at this time to ensure that over time they will be threaded through all our processes, policies and ways of working.

4. Main report

- 4.1 As part of the policy development, we reviewed the requirements from Stonewall, and Equally Safe at Work, we considered Disability Confident and our aim to become an anti-racist employer as well as reflecting on our broader commitments to creating a welcoming organisation for everyone, especially those who may feel marginalised.
- 4.2 We have undertaken engagement with colleagues, specialist teams, HR colleagues and a range of our external partners to check their views on whether
- the language is fully inclusive
 - there was anything missing in the policy they'd like to see
 - there was anything they particularly liked or wanted to change
- 4.3 Engagement with external partners included Equality and Rights Network (EaRN) who shared the draft with their broader network (32 organisations), Close the Gap, Stonewall and Edinburgh & Lothians Regional Equality Council (ELREC).
- 4.4 The development of this policy progresses the commitments in our People Strategy 2024 to 2027 and articulates our intentions to ensure equality, fairness and inclusion for our people.
- 4.5 Consultation with our recognised Trades Unions has taken place and this policy is a local collective agreement.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 If approved, there will be a communications campaign to raise awareness of the policy for managers and colleagues and a series of reminders regarding the supporting EDI learning available.

6. Financial impact

6.1 There are no associated costs from implementing the policy.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

7.1 This policy has been assessed for possible impacts on vulnerable groups, people with protected characteristics, equality and human rights and economic factors as part of our integrated impact assessment. The report has been published.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

8.1 Not applicable.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

9.1 Not applicable.

10. Background reading/external references

10.1 <https://www.equallysafeatwork.scot/>

10.2 [Diversity Champions Programme | Stonewall](#)

10.3 [Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme Report for Council May 2023](#)

10.4 [16 Days of Activism Report for Policy and Sustainability Committee May 2023](#)

11. Appendices

11.1 Equality Policy - Workforce

Colleague Equality Policy

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Protecting Colleagues from Unacceptable Behaviours Policy and associated Guidance
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Transgender Colleagues in the Workplace Guidance
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Family Leave
- Flexible Work Options Policy
- Special Leave Policy
- Alcohol and Drugs Policy

Author	Review
Organisational Development Team, Human Resources	The policy will be reviewed as and when a change to the existing policy deems this necessary, primarily as a result of changes to legislation or statute; agreement of new national terms and conditions of service or Government Policy; organisational change; or resulting from changes agreed through Trade Union Consultation.

Local Agreement

This policy is a local collective agreement between the Council and our recognised Trade Unions. We will make every effort to ensure that it is maintained as a local collective agreement. Any changes will be made by agreement. If we cannot agree, either party can end the local collective agreement by giving four months' notice in writing, with the policy ceasing to apply to staff at the end of that period.

Colleague Equality Policy

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1. Introduction

The City of Edinburgh Council (the Council) is committed to promoting equality and tackling discrimination as outlined in the [People Strategy-2024-2027](#) . This means treating people fairly, valuing differences and removing the barriers that prevent people from fully participating in public life and realising their full potential.

As a Council we are working extremely hard to reduce inequality, yet we know that some people still experience disadvantage and unfair treatment simply because of their personal characteristics or circumstances.

This policy sets out how we will make equality integral to the way we reach decisions, provide services, recruit and support our employees, work with other organisations and involve local people.

Our aim is to make the Council a fully accessible and inclusive organisation that welcomes and respects the diversity of its residents, service users, elected members, workforce, and visitors to our city.

2. Scope

This internal policy applies to employees and workers, job applicants, persons contracted to personally provide services to the Council, persons undergoing training or work experience as part of a training

course, and agency workers (collectively known as our colleagues). It also applies to elected members (councillors).

We have a separate strategic framework which sets out the Council's ambitions to advance equality and promote diversity in our City - prioritising and addressing inequality [Equality and Diversity Framework-2021-2025](#). This framework responds to the 'Public Sector Equality Duty', which forms part of the Equality Act 2010.

We also expect people who use our services and members of the public to comply with our equality standards, as appropriate, and will consider the impact of any unequal treatment of our workforce in line with other relevant Council policies and procedures.

We all have a right to be treated fairly and with dignity and respect. Similarly we are all responsible for ensuring that our own actions and behaviours are fair and that we respect the dignity of others. This responsibility extends to reading and following this policy in full.

3. Understanding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

When we talk about equality, we mean treating people fairly, impartially and without bias. We mean creating conditions in the workplace and wider society which encourage and value diversity, promote dignity and inclusion and which adopt a culturally sensitive approach.

Equality is having equal opportunities and rights. It doesn't mean treating everyone the same. Equality is recognising that everyone is different, and that people's needs are met in different ways. Treating people **equitably** promotes equality and involves acknowledging these differences and trying to redress imbalances through a differentiated approach, where necessary and appropriate.

We describe equality as essentially being about fairness and ensuring that we all have the best possible chance to succeed in life whatever our background or identity.

Diversity is about understanding that everyone is unique; recognising, respecting, and celebrating the benefits that differences bring. Diversity includes the nine protected characteristics but extends beyond them to unique characteristics that are not protected in the Equality Act (2010).

Inclusion is where difference is seen as a benefit, where perspectives and differences are valued so everyone feels they belong, leading to improved and inclusive decision making. An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels safe, that their contribution matters, and they can perform to their full potential, regardless of background, identity, or circumstances. An inclusive workplace enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively.

4. Our Commitment

We are committed to ensuring equality, fairness, inclusion and good relations are at the heart of everything we do, be it policymaking, service delivery or employment practice.

Our Colleague Equality Policy is informed by our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Workforce Strategy which articulates how we will advance equality, diversity and inclusion, and is underpinned by the

commitment to our organisational Behaviours - Respect, Integrity, and Flexibility (Our Behaviours). The policy aligns with our Equality and Diversity Framework 2021 to 2025.

Our Behaviours promote a strong and positive organisational culture which shapes the way we work together, how we approach our challenges and how we relate to others. We want our workplace to be open, positive, inclusive, and safe. Our Behaviours will contribute to a workplace that supports everyone to do their best work. They will help us to support every colleague to feel trusted, valued and recognised for their contribution and able to report or speak up against discrimination of any kind without fear of victimisation.

Our commitment to inclusion is an active process, aiming to create welcoming places where all people can fully contribute to our work. It is about making people feel welcome and accepted, especially those that are socially excluded, marginalised or under-represented. It is about encouraging participation so that everyone feels valued, respected and involved, thereby fostering a sense of belonging. It strengthens cultural relations and supports trust between each other, across our workplaces and our city.

To support our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, we will:

- Comply with and embrace equality law and good practice, which includes promoting equality.
- Regularly monitor and assess the impact of our policies, services and functions to ensure they are fair and reflect people's different needs.
- Value diversity and support campaigns for greater equality and awareness.
- Make equality, diversity and inclusion a part of our everyday business.
- Continue to adopt fair working practices to advance in the Fair Work First criteria.
- Work in partnership with local and national organisations who support employers to make progress in equality.
- Adopt a trauma-informed and responsive approach (TIRA) to inform all our interactions as an employer, as colleagues, as managers, within leadership and as a service provider.
- Raise awareness of the links between women's unequal treatment in wider society, sex-based workplace inequality and violence against women and work towards identifying and addressing this where it manifests in our workforce.
- Continue to take into account that experiences of employment are shaped by intersecting inequalities.

To do this we expect all our colleagues and elected members to:

- Treat everyone with integrity, dignity and respect at all times.
- Provide the best possible standards of service and value for money to residents and communities.
- Consider the needs and views of every marginalised community.
- Be trauma-informed and aware of the impact of trauma in people's lives.
- Positively interact with each other and with people who use our services in a way that promotes recovery, equality and improves outcomes.

We want to ensure there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, sex, gender identity and gender expression, marital status including civil partnership, political opinion, race/ethnicity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, spent convictions, trade union activity or membership, having or not having dependents, work patterns, or on any other irrelevant grounds.

In addition, we aim to develop our awareness of the differing ways in which discrimination can be compounded when different characteristics such as ethnicity and gender, or disability and age intersect.

5. Our Legal Responsibilities

The Council, as an employer and service provider, will meet all legal duties in respect of equality and diversity. The Equality Act 2010, protects people from discrimination on the basis of the following nine protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage & civil partnership
- pregnancy & maternity
- race
- religion & belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Discrimination, whether direct or indirect, is a barrier to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Discrimination is where you treat a person or a group differently or unequally in comparison with other people or groups, based on a characteristic they have or that you think they have. Discrimination is where decisions are made (whether consciously or not) that favour certain groups or individuals and therefore disadvantage others, because of their particular characteristics. Unlawful discrimination is unacceptable on all the grounds identified within this policy.

Discrimination does not necessarily occur because of a conscious decision. There are subtle and unconscious ways of unjustifiably discriminating. Some examples include:

- Making general assumptions about a person's capabilities, characteristics, beliefs and interests.
- Applying requirements, conditions, or criteria without considering whether they advantage or disadvantage particular groups.
- Ignoring intersecting aspects of inequality, where two or more characteristics are present in an individual's identity, as this can place them at a higher risk of disadvantage and discrimination.

The Council also has a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires all public bodies to eliminate harassment and discrimination as well as consider the needs of protected groups when designing and delivering services.

In Scotland the general duty under the PSED stipulates three needs:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

As well as the general duty, the Council is required to meet the additional specific duties set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, as amended: -

- report on mainstreaming the equality duty
- publish equality outcomes and report progress
- assess and review the equality impact of policies and practices

- gather, use and publish employee information
- use information on the characteristics of members or board members gathered by the Scottish Ministers
- publish gender pay gap information
- publish equal pay statements
- consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement
- publish in a manner that is accessible

Our Public Sector Equality Duty also requires us to adopt transparent and effective measures to address the inequalities that result from differences in occupation, education, place of residence or social class.

6. Our Collective Responsibility for Equality

Equality is everyone's responsibility. All colleagues, people leaders, senior managers, elected members and any other person or organisation employed by the Council to work or to deliver services on our behalf, including those employed through contractual, commissioning or grant-aided arrangements must play their part in meeting our legal responsibility.

We will use all available routes to communicate and promote this policy:

- Elected members will promote our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion in their day-to-day work.
- The Council's Corporate Leadership Team will be responsible for the overall management and direction of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion commitments. They will ensure our equality commitments are embraced through our strategies, key policies and service delivery.
- Managers will make sure EDI is core to service delivery and people management.
- All colleagues will ensure they are aware of this policy and take responsibility to promote EDI and challenge discrimination.
- Contractors, suppliers and potential suppliers, will be advised of this policy through the tendering and contract review processes
- Our service users and tenants, volunteers, and those employed through contractual, commissioning or grant-aided arrangements also have a responsibility to treat our workforce with dignity and respect.
- We will ask our service users and tenants to let us know if they require assistance or adjustments to enable them to better access our services.

7. Addressing Disadvantage and Inequality

This policy has a primary but not exclusive focus on the experience of colleagues who may be affected by the nine protected characteristics:

Disability (and long-term health conditions)

We are currently a Disability Confident Employer, and we recognise disability as a broad concept that includes physical, sensory, learning, and mental health issues as well as neurodiversity and long-standing and fluctuating health conditions e.g., HIV and cancer. We strive for disability inclusion and

are committed to addressing unlawful discrimination against, and promoting the inclusion of, disabled people in our workforce and work and public life. We aspire to address this by consciously identifying and removing barriers and making reasonable adjustments.

We aim to adjust our working arrangements, policies and practices to enable people with disabilities to take up employment and progress in their careers.

Sex

We are committed to tackling all forms of sex discrimination and to promoting equality and eradicating unlawful discrimination in relation to women and girls who frequently experience social and economic disadvantage, negative attitudes, alienation, abuse and violence. We recognise that women's wider inequality in society is the root cause of women's labour market inequality and that making progress toward women's equality in the workplace will begin to address gender inequality more broadly. This is reflected in our Equally Safe At Work commitments.

Women's experiences are shaped by the multiple inequalities they experience. This means that race, disability, faith, sexual orientation or gender identity can overlap and intersect to magnify a woman's experience of discrimination. For example, a disabled woman's experience will differ from a Black woman's experience based on the different intersections of disability and sex or race and sex.

We recognise that occupational segregation is a consequence of inequality between men and women and are committed to identifying and addressing patterns of occupational segregation within our workforce. Occupational segregation (by sex) refers to the unequal distribution of women and men across different types and levels of work. Horizontal segregation occurs when gendered assumptions about men's and women's capabilities and preferences result in them doing different types of work. Vertical segregation refers to the underrepresentation of women in management positions, sometimes referred to as the 'glass ceiling'.

Occupational segregation is influenced by gender stereotypes, inflexible working practices, undervaluation of roles, and workplace culture. It perpetuates gender inequality in the workplace and contributes to the gender pay gap.

We recognise that responsibility for dependents falls predominantly on women, with women globally doing at least twice as much unpaid care work as men.

Pregnancy and Maternity

We recognise that working mothers are still disadvantaged in the workplace and face pregnancy and maternity discrimination and unfavourable treatment including fewer development or career opportunities and negative attitudes from managers and colleagues. Discrimination contributes to occupational segregation and the gender pay gap.

We will communicate development opportunities which arise during pregnancy and maternity leave including 'Keeping in touch' (KIT) days which provide an important opportunity for women on maternity leave to take part in learning and development.

We are committed to enabling working mothers to achieve their potential through offering flexible working so that they can balance caring responsibilities with progressing their careers. Collecting data on women's experiences of returning to work is an important part of understanding women's experiences and addressing disadvantage.

Gender Reassignment

We recognise and seek to eradicate unlawful discrimination on the basis of gender reassignment or perceived gender reassignment, or because an individual is intersex or has a non-binary gender identity which may include being gender fluid.

We commit to making relevant guidance available to make people aware of the challenges faced by transgender and intersex people and to offer appropriate support and interventions within our workplaces. We aim to enable everyone to be recognised and referred to as they wish and to meaningfully and effectively respond to any concerns and issues raised.

Sexual Orientation

We are committed to supporting people of diverse sexual orientations including lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, heterosexual and others to feel included and valued and to tackling any discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation.

We believe all colleagues have the right to be themselves at work without having to be concerned about sharing aspects of who they are.

Whilst we respect the right of individuals to be open, or otherwise, about their sexual orientation, we recognise that sexual minorities can face specific challenges and be fearful of being 'out' in the workplace, due to homophobia, biphobia and heteronormativity. We also recognise that the experiences of people from different religions or cultures may vary considerably.

We support everyone working with us to understand that negative messages or stereotypes, based on actual or perceived sexual orientation are unacceptable and inconsistent with our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

We want our workplace to be open and inclusive and a safe space for all colleagues regardless of their sexual orientation. We are aware that there can be particular hostility towards sexual minorities. Such hostility is sometimes intensified when same sex couples have children/dependents. We seek to offer a supportive environment to all colleagues and service-users regardless of their sexual orientation and working context.

Race / Ethnicity and Culture

Racial discrimination includes less favourable or unequal treatment based on nationality, ethnic and national origins, skin colour and other physical markers and is strongly associated with religion and culture.

We believe that our workplaces are enriched by a diversity of racial / ethnic and cultural groups and that cultural relations have an important role to play in mutual understanding and exchange between different racial / ethnic and cultural groups.

We expect all colleagues, people leaders and senior managers to ensure there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race / ethnicity within their sphere of responsibility and to promote positive and equitable relations between different races / ethnicities and cultures.

We will take care not to expect unnecessarily high levels of English language competency for all employment opportunities, although there will be some roles where a high level of literacy in English will be required.

Our commitment to becoming an anti-racist employer will help to ensure we are working pro-actively towards race equality.

As a local authority we need to be especially attuned to our history, including the legacy of empire and colonialism and the impact this might have on people from other parts of the world and be open about acknowledging this.

Age

We believe it is positive to have a workforce of different generations and ages and to encourage the contributions of younger people and adults of different ages across the range of our work, as appropriate. We also believe there is much to gain from an intergenerational approach to both our

internal and external work, where people are encouraged to learn from those with different life experiences.

We will avoid age discrimination by implication, for example, by implying 'future leaders' are always young people. In some instances, they may be people with disabilities who have taken a longer and / or a different route through education and training, or older people who have taken longer for socio-economic reasons or cultural / geographical reasons.

Religion and Belief

We value and respect the different religions and beliefs held by colleagues and across our city, including those who hold no religion or belief.

We will aim to provide a dedicated faith or quiet room for prayer, meditation or reflection in our workplaces or we will make provision, as required, by the flexible use of our facilities. This includes supporting staff who are fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. Our [Special Leave Policy](#) outlines the support provisions for time off for religious observances.

We are aware that there can be hostility towards religious minorities, and we seek to offer a supportive environment to all colleagues regardless of their religion / belief and working context. We acknowledge that world events may exacerbate hostility against particular groups at times and will actively work towards supporting colleagues affected by world events.

We believe that developing a better understanding of other people's religions and beliefs will contribute to improved cultural relations.

Care-experienced

The term "care-experienced" refers to anyone who is currently or has been in the care system including kinship care, looked after at home, foster care, residential care, secure homes and adoption.

We recognise that care-experienced people may face stigma, prejudice and discrimination in their lives, and we are committed to supporting care-experienced people to feel included and to address any potential barriers to participation in the workplace.

City of Edinburgh Council has given formal recognition to "care-experienced" people as a protected characteristic to be considered in all integrated impact assessments carried out during the decision-making and policy making process. We have extended our guaranteed interview scheme to include all applicants who are or have been care experienced, and who meet the essential criteria for the post.

Socio-economic Background

We recognise that employment, educational attainment, numeracy and literacy, the quality and nature of health care, housing, access to opportunities and to our services, are all significantly influenced by our socio-economic background. Socio-economic inequality leads to unequal treatment, marginalisation and reduced opportunity.

As part of our commitment to demonstrating the social value of our work, we aim to increase employment-related opportunities for people with experience of poverty or from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

We will strengthen this commitment through our People Strategy to help widen participation in employment and our activities for socio-economically disadvantaged people (including those with characteristics that often compound disadvantage, most notably disability, race / ethnicity or being care-experienced). Our activities are guided by an understanding of the role that fair work can play in reducing socio-economic inequalities – through provision of employment that offers security, fulfilment, respect, opportunity and an effective voice in the workplace.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

We are committed to preventing discrimination during employment against colleagues on the basis that they are legally married or in a civil partnership.

HIV

Given the climate of fear and misinformation that still exists around HIV, we recognise the unique nature of this illness and its prevalence, we will not discriminate against applicants or employees who are Human Immunodeficiency Virus positive (HIV+). We are committed to breaking down the stigma sometimes still attached to HIV and recognise that it can impact anyone.

In the UK, those with a diagnosis of HIV are protected against unlawful discrimination from the point of diagnosis.

8. Employment Practice

We are committed to ensuring that we have effective policies, strategies, procedures and processes and that we encourage behaviour which promotes equality, encourages diversity and contributes to an inclusive organisational culture.

Our employment practice is guided by the principles of equality and fairness. This includes recruitment, terms and conditions, one to one conversations, learning and development, promotion and when leaving our employment.

To help us ensure that equality is an integral part of our employment practices the Council is currently a member of the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion <https://www.enei.org.uk/>.

Recruitment and Selection

Equality is an important part of our recruitment and selection processes. We require all recruiting managers to undertake the relevant training on MyLearningHub. Throughout all aspects of our recruitment and selection process we should reflect the need to promote equality, encourage diversity and strive for greater inclusion (unless specific exemptions apply in compliance with the Equality Act).

Advertisements, whether internal or external, must not indicate or appear to indicate an intention to unjustifiably discriminate on the grounds we have identified within this policy. This means, for example, thinking very carefully before applying age criteria, specific experience or qualification requirements, restricting flexible working or defining personality type or communication style required for the post.

Given that we are looking to attract candidates from diverse backgrounds we will look for opportunities to advertise broadly and extend our reach to access underrepresented groups in our community and encourage their recruitment to our workforce.

During Employment

We are committed to being a fair and supportive employer, developing the skills and talent within our workforce so that all colleagues can feel safe and respected and equipped to deliver high quality services.

To achieve this, we will:

- Develop annual actions plans to progress and measure the aspirations outlined in the Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024 to 2028
- Take steps to become an anti-racist organisation.
- Carry out recruitment based fairly on skills and talent

- Provide training to our workforce so that they can implement this policy effectively.
- Treat all our workforce fairly, with dignity and respect at all times.
- Tackle unacceptable behaviour in the workplace.
- Provide employees with opportunities to influence the development of our policies and practice.
- Reward all employees fairly and provide employment conditions which support them to be their best
- Continue to be a real Living Wage accredited employer
- Take steps to narrow gender, disability and ethnicity pay gaps
- Promote a good work-life balance and opportunities to work flexibly
- Support colleagues with disabilities and long-term health conditions by making reasonable adjustments.
- Monitor and publish the demographic profile of our workforce as required.
- Become a Trauma Responsive Workplace
- Achieve Equally Safe Accredited Employer status.
- Become a Stonewall Diversity Champion.

The Council will not tolerate any form of bullying and harassment in the workplace. We will treat all incidents seriously and promptly investigate all reports. Where allegations are substantiated, the bullying and harassment will be treated as a disciplinary offence.

As a progressive employer one of the major objectives of our EDI Strategy is to eliminate all forms of discrimination including micro-aggressions.

Our commitments will be supported through the production of guidance documents and toolkits, e-learning, workshops and other learning and development strategies and activities, including positive action as appropriate.

Performance Development

Our Equality Policy applies to performance development, performance management and other related development opportunities including succession planning, career progression, employment breaks, secondments and any other opportunities which may arise.

Equality becomes meaningful if all colleagues consider how equality, diversity and inclusion can add value to their work. People leaders all have Our Behaviours as part of their leadership goal and measures. We also want all colleagues to consider this as part of their own personal development plan and therefore a relevant performance goal can help achieve this and close the gap between what we say and what we do.

Positive action

Positive action aims to promote equality by improving outcomes for groups who are under-represented or disadvantaged. We will aim to do this as appropriate where there is under-representation in our workforce and will develop guidance on what measures we can take into account and how we can go about this.

Positive action will sometimes underpin the equality targets we have set to address under-representation in our workforce based on the demographic of our city.

9. Equality Analysis - making fair decisions every day

Decisions are made within the Council that affect the lives and relationships of local people, people who use services, employees, commuters, students, and tourists visiting Edinburgh.

The Council's Integrated Impact Assessment process ensures that due care and consideration is given to the potential impact of decisions made by the Council on the lives of groups and individuals who share a protected characteristic and others at risk of disadvantage. This analysis is exercised in such a way that influences the final decision and is also used to identify positive actions that will mitigate any negative effects of our decision making.

Impact assessments are a means of promoting equality and good relations, supporting inclusion and avoiding unlawful discrimination, whilst also ensuring that we carefully consider the different needs of particular groups. During the development and delivery of services, impact assessments are "live documents" for the lifetime of a project. They contribute to the social value we seek to deliver by raising awareness and understanding and specifying standards for all the work we do which promotes equality.

As part of our commitment to become an Equally Safe accredited employer we will undertake gender impact assessments of all policies and functions which impact on employees and / or external contacts or the wider community as part of our Integrated Impact Assessments.

Equality and gender analysis will be used as a tool to help us make fair, sound and transparent decisions that are based on a robust understanding of the needs and rights of the groups and individuals who may be affected.

10. Equality Information

Whenever relevant and required to do so we will collate, analyse, interpret and publish information about equality and diversity in the workforce.

This information will be used in equality analysis to:

- Inform our service planning, policy development and decision-making process.
- Understand the impact of policies, practices and decisions on people with different protected characteristics, and to plan them more effectively.
- Help identify key equality issues and inform our action plans and recruitment processes.
- Develop and monitor our equality objectives.
- Identify ways of improving our performance.
- Demonstrate compliance with our Public Sector Equality Duty.

When we ask individuals to provide information about their personal characteristics, this will only be done where the information is relevant to the aims of our equality duties.

We will always make it clear that disclosure of sensitive information (e.g. sexual orientation, gender identity or religion or belief) is optional and not compulsory. All personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence in line with our GDPR responsibilities.

However, without gathering some form of evidence, it may be difficult to monitor the impact of policies and procedures on certain protected groups and therefore we will continue to highlight the importance of this data for our EDI aspirations. We will aim to overcome this by creating a culture of trust whereby individuals are comfortable disclosing such information.

We will uphold our duty to protect an individual's right to privacy and will not publish information that could identify an individual. Nor will the information be used to identify an individual or make a decision about them purely on the grounds of the information that has been provided in relation to their protected characteristics.

All personal data will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulations and in compliance with our [Information Governance Policy](#).

11. Equality and Pay

We have a commitment to a pay system that is transparent and based on objective criteria. This includes a commitment to transparency and fairness in the allocation of allowances and any other aspects of reward and remuneration.

Equal pay, free from unjustified bias, for the same or broadly similar work (that is, for work that rates as equivalent and for work of equal value) operates within our Council.

We will continue to undertake regular UK equality and gender pay audits, monitoring of our equal pay approach, and related equality pay gap assessments with an intersectional dimension and comply with our external reporting requirements. We will continue to extend these beyond our statutory obligations as a progressive employer. The most recent Pay Gap Reports and Equal Pay Statement can be found [here](#).

Throughout this we will continue to meet our commitments as an accredited real Living Wage employer.

12. Protecting our People

As an employer, we have a duty of care to provide a safe working environment for all colleagues. This includes a specific obligation to protect their health, safety and welfare.

We expect people who use our services to treat our employees with respect. They should be protected from unacceptable behaviours including violence, aggression, bullying, harassment and discriminatory behaviour whether it originates from service users, elected members, members of the public or from other colleagues in the workplace. Where any colleague is subjected to unacceptable behaviours the Council will respond in line with relevant Council policies and procedures.

Hate Crime

We are committed to working in partnership to ensure that hate crime is not tolerated within our organisation. Hate crime is a crime which is motivated by prejudice, hostility or hatred towards a person or group of people due to their age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, transgender identity, disability, variations in sex characteristics or race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins. A hate crime can be on the basis of a perceived protected characteristic. It can include abusive behaviour, threats, insults and even physical attacks on a person or their property. We will support colleagues who are victims of a hate crime in the course of their work, in line with our [Protecting our Colleagues from Unacceptable Behaviours Policy](#).

Domestic Abuse

We are committed to tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence and have developed a policy on Domestic Abuse to raise awareness of the signs and help individuals experiencing domestic abuse to increase their safety. We will support victims / survivors and hold perpetrators responsible and accountable

for their actions. Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults is everybody's business, wherever they work and whatever they do for the Council. This includes all our workforce, elected members and people who work for organisations that provide services on behalf of the Council.

Violence Against Women (VAW) and Gender Inequality

Violence against women refers to violence and / or abusive behaviour that is predominantly carried out by men and directed at women. This behaviour includes physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and economic abuse and stems from systemic and deep-rooted women's inequality. It affects women from all backgrounds irrespective of age, sexual orientation, race, education, culture and socioeconomic demographic and includes, but is not limited to:

- domestic abuse
- sexual harassment
- rape and sexual assault
- stalking
- 'honour-based' abuse

While women and girls are at greatest risk of gender-based violence, we know that boys, men, transgender and non-binary people are also affected.

Sexism describes prejudice or discrimination based on sex or gender. Whilst it can affect everyone, women are particularly affected. It is based on a belief system around the nature of men and women and the roles they should play in society. These beliefs are linked to gender stereotypes and lead to assumptions that one gender is inferior to another.

In the workplace sexist assumptions and practices can hold women back from progressing in their careers and can channel them into roles that are viewed as requiring "feminine" skills and attributes. Sexist behaviour which becomes normalised such as derogatory or over-familiar comments, sexist jokes and language, ignoring women's contributions and lack of respect impacts women personally and professionally. Sexist behaviour of this nature is not acceptable.

Our Protecting Colleagues from Unacceptable Behaviour policy and associated guidance outlines unacceptable behaviours and how to report them. Learning will be provided for all colleagues to understand how gender stereotypes and unconscious bias can manifest, how it can impact colleagues and action to take to remove it, including where the unacceptable behaviours arise from service users.

We are committed to eliminating all forms of violence against women and to providing a robust and transparent confidential reporting process to support our colleagues to identify, report and address unacceptable behaviour in the workplace and beyond. Through our ongoing work to change culture through Our Behaviours, policies and learning we are committed to creating a zero-tolerance environment towards gender-based violence.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment occurs when a colleague is subjected to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and incorporates a spectrum of behaviours, ranging from suggestive looks or gestures to sexual assault. We recognise sexual harassment as a form of Gender Based Violence (GBV). It can occur across all genders and sexual orientations but we also recognise that it is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women. Our Sexual Harassment Policy provides advice and guidance for colleagues on prevention, reporting and management of sexual harassment in the workplace.

13. Implementing this Policy

We recognise that leadership and commitment from all colleagues and elected members, with adequate resources allocated, are essential for this policy to be effective.

Our work will be guided by the codes of practice and guidance published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

We will share best practice through membership of equality networks, working with communities and partnerships and internally through our trade unions, colleague networks and other relevant equality working groups.

We will use our Public Sector Equality Duty activity to review and improve our performance for people with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act (2010).

We will actively consider how we can embed best practice within our workforce and our service delivery by:

- embedding equalities within our leadership and organisational commitments.
- developing and recruiting a diverse and engaged workforce.
- understanding and working with our colleague networks and marginalised communities.
- providing opportunities for equalities, diversity and inclusion learning for everyone at every level in the organisation.

Looking at this policy, reflecting on our past actions and building on our vision will help us to think further about what we want to do better and what our equality objectives could be moving forward. We understand that identifying and taking action is key to mainstreaming equality for our workforce and we will therefore deliver our commitments through regularly reviewing and updating our Colleague EDI Strategy and annual Action Plans.