**Equality & Diversity Outcomes – Progress 2023-2025**

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| 1. | **Introduction** |

Fife Council approved its [equality and diversity outcomes in 2021](https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/council-and-democracy/equality%2C-diversity-and-human-rights) following extensive consultation and engagement with protected characteristics led by Fife Centre for Equalities. Although there is much equality and diversity work that goes on in the Council, feedback from the engagement exercise ensured that the Council was taking forward outcomes and actions which would benefit as many people as possible.

The outcomes and actions approved covered a four year period – this report is the final update and sums up what has been achieved against each outcome. The 2021-2023 progress report is available [here](https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/council-and-democracy/equality%2C-diversity-and-human-rights).

The Council is also due to publish its revised equality priorities for the next four years starting April 2025 and these are referenced in this report. A report on the latter will be submitted to the June Cabinet Committee. A workshop to seek Member feedback on the new four year priorities will be held on 6th May 2025.

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| **2.** | **Public Sector Equality Duty & National Context**  |

**Public Sector Equality Duty**

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 came into force in April 2011, introducing a new Public Sector Equality Duty that became law across Scotland. The public sector equality duty has 3 parts which all public authorities need to comply with. The 3 parts are called the general duty and public authorities need to consider each of these:

* Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
* Advance equality of opportunity between those who have a protected characteristics and those who do not
* Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act are:

* Age
* Disability
* Gender reassignment
* Marriage and civil partnership
* Pregnancy and maternity
* Race – this includes ethnic or national origin, colour and nationality. This includes Gypsy Travellers
* Religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
* Sex
* Sexual orientation

The public sector equality duty under the Equality Act requires the Council to:

* ***Mainstream*** – How the duty is being integrated into other functions undertaken by the Council.
* ***Set equality outcomes*** – The results which the authority wishes to achieve. The outcomes must have been set with the engagement of protected characteristics and/or evidence relating to the protected characteristics.
* ***Involve*** all protected characteristics - and anyone else the local authority considers represents the interests of people with protected characteristics.
* Consider ***relevant evidence*** relating to people with protected characteristics.
* ***Assess*** and review policies and practices.
* ***Gather*** and use employment information.
* ***Publish*** a revised set of outcomes within a reasonable timescale.

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| **3.** | **Progress on Equality & Diversity Outcomes 2023-2025** |

The Council set five equality outcomes for the period 2021-2025. The Senior Equalities Group, which oversees the equalities work across the Council, regularly receives updates on how the outcomes and actions are being implemented. This section sums up some of the achievements over the final two years of the initial outcomes.

**Outcome 1: Fife’s communities are provided with services and information accessible to them particularly those who face barriers through disability, language and digital exclusion.**

**What we prioritised**

The Council recognised that there will be people from the protected characteristics and other vulnerable groups who are not able to use digital forms of communication and do not take part in decision making. This was evident during the pandemic when certain groups including ethnic minority people, people with disabilities and people from low income households missed out on communication about the pandemic.

We committed to: providing information in a range of formats including BSL and community languages; using a range of consultation tools and engagement tools to seek views; and channel more information through the Community Portal.

**What we achieved**

The Council continues to provide information in a range of formats including community languages, BSL and by SMS text to people who have hearing impairments. In 2024, we trialled a machine readable translation app for documents with the aim of turning around translated documents quicker – from days to minutes as well as saving money. The trial went well although we realised that machine readable translations are better for non-personal information and routine non-technical documents. Going forward we aim to develop the trial further and provide guidance to staff on providing machine readable translations.

A [community engagement toolkit](https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/have-your-say2/consultations-and-petitions/consultation-toolkit) has been developed to help support engagement with communities and sets out which engagement method is best for the type of consultation. The toolkit can be used in the **planning, delivery and evaluation**of work and sets out various tools to help with informing, consulting and engaging with members of the public.

**Outcome 2**: **Women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse – and the attitudes that help perpetuate it**

**What we prioritised**

* The actions under this outcome related to the Fife Violence Against Women Partnership (FVAWP) and specifically the Priority 2 sub-group.
* Revised Equality and Diversity Scheme to reflect impact of Covid -19 including identifying inequality of outcome and disadvantage on women, children and young people.
* Fife Council to work with FVAWP to progress actions within the Equally Safe at Work framework
* Consult with women, children and young people with lived experience of VAW.

**What we achieved**

Equally Safe is Scotland's national strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls. The strategy was refreshed and re -published in December 2023 setting out four priorities:

1. Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls
2. Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically, and politically
3. Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women children and young people
4. Men reject all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response

In relation to priority 2, Fife Council successfully achieved Equally Safe at Work accreditation at the Bronze level in October 2023. The award is designed to create sustainable change in workplace practice and Fife Council hold the accreditation until November 2025. Other work included prioritising violence against women and girls within community planning and building relationships with the Health and Social Care partnership. See the full annual report here [FVAWP Annual Report 2023-2024](https://www.fife.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0023/624029/FVAWP-Annual-Report-2023-2024.pdf)

**Outcome 3: Fife’s communities (including people from the protected characteristics) have increased confidence to participate in decision making, their human rights respected and have an improved quality of life**

**What we prioritised**

This was very much a partnership outcome ensuring that there was: regular monitoring reports around harassment and bullying motivated by hate; there was awareness of Police Scotland’s third party reporting centres; a partnership approach to participation in decision making was developed; and that People and Place local arrangements would be used to build a stronger community-led approach.

**What we achieved**

The Council has a hate incidents policy and managers will receive and deal with any incidents of hate motivated by protected characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, disability. The Council is also represented on the Hate Crime Core Group chaired by Police Scotland which considers reports of hate crimes including by locality and type of crime. Hate crime reports are reported through the Community Safety Partnership.

[Fife People’s Panel](https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/have-your-say2/consultations-and-petitions/fife-peoples-panel) was launched in 2006 and consists of a group of people who have volunteered to help improve Fife by giving their opinions and observations on a variety of public issues. The Panel is organised by Fife Partnership – which combines Fife Council, NHS Fife, Police, Fire Service and the voluntary sector.

Another partnership resource is the community engagement toolkit which has been mentioned in outcome 1 above.

[Fife Centre for Equalities](https://www.centreforequalities.org.uk/) is funded through a Service Level Agreement to engage with protected characteristics on behalf of the Council. They undertook engagement with individuals and groups when setting the 2021-2025 equality outcomes and have been involved in shaping the new priorities. The qualitative engagement is particularly essential in helping the Council to plan and deliver services which meets the needs of different communities.

**Outcome 4: The Council understands its workforce better and it reflects the diversity of the local population**

**What we prioritised**

The Council recognises that as one of Fife’s largest employers we have a responsibility to model fair and inclusive workplace practices. In line with the Council becoming a data driven organisation, we need to improve our data collection in relation to staff perceptions, needs and wants. This will give us an opportunity to analyse and interpret relevant data to produce coherent and targeted policies and actions.

Our workforce priorities therefore were focused on improving the data we hold about employees; engaging with local communities (including young people) about the Council’s workplace practices; supporting our trans employees; supporting the recruitment and retention of disabled employees and reviewing equality and diversity training as well as developing more flexible workstyles.

**What we achieved**

We have an ongoing communication campaign to explain why and how we collect information, encourage employees to check that their information has been recorded and if not request they complete it. These key messages have been built into a variety of different communications for employees on issues such as Transgender Awareness, Interfaith Week and Global Diversity Awareness.

Fife Centre for Equalities (FCE) undertook research into the public’s perception of Fife Council as an employer and access to the job opportunities we offer. This piece of work was specifically targeted at minority ethnic communities within Fife as our data from the last reporting period showed we had a disproportionately low number of applications from these groups. FCE ran a survey from August to November 2022 with follow up focus groups and interviews.

The survey results highlighted some potential barriers to individuals applying for employment including the requirement for a supporting statement and the need for flexibility and accessibility in communication. Since the results of the survey were published in 2023 we have taken action to address the issues raised. Some key actions include:

* Reducing the requirement for a supporting statement in recruitment for certain posts
* Streamlined communication through the website and a renewed emphasis on the use of plain language
* Bi-annual job fairs held in different parts of Fife, backed by BSL support with the aim of targeting all parts of the Fife community

We continue to operate the Workforce Youth Investment Programme (WYI) whereby £800k is invested annually into providing a range of opportunities for those aged 16-24 residing in Fife. Opportunities include apprenticeships, traineeships, graduate roles and entry level work placements. WYI also continue to support care experienced young people and work with Employability and Social Work colleagues to fund work opportunities to those from this group who have completed a successful work-based placement. In 2023/24, WYI supported 24 young people into roles across the Council. The roles varied from Modern Apprenticeships in Horticulture, Early Years Education, Care and Digital Media to Traineeships in Digital Skills and Health and Safety.

As an employer, we must make reasonable adjustments to ensure employees with disabilities, or physical / mental health conditions, are not disadvantaged at work.  We've devised a new reasonable adjustment and assistive technology system to create a central hub for employees and managers. It summarises the types of supports that can be accessed, as well as guidance on the application process and grants available.

The [Equality and Diversity in Employment](https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/council-and-democracy/equality%2C-diversity-and-human-rights) report setting out detailed progress of achievements including workforce profile information and gender pay gap is available online.

**Outcome 5:** Raising educational achievement and attainment particularly for those in their early years or in early learning and childcare

**What we prioritised**

The Fairer Fife Commission report stated that the Fife Partnership should require all schools to develop and deliver a plan for significantly reducing the educational attainment gap.

The actions we prioritised under this outcome were wide-ranging with a focus on: pupils being made aware of Fife’s historical links to slavery; improving educational achievement and attainment for pupils with protected characteristics and Care Experienced pupils; improving early years development of children including two year olds; and increasing participation of parents living in deprived areas.

**What we achieved**

* All ELC settings benefit from trained Bookbug and PEEP facilitators, offering regular opportunities for parents to share in children's learning.
* Incredible Years parenting programme is facilitated across Fife to enable parents to build their capacity.
* All family Nurture Centres offer a range of formal and informal parenting support mechanisms which all parents for the local area can access.
* Revised Personal Learning Journals have been implemented in all funded provider settings.  Tracking and monitoring reference materials will help to plan for children’s individual developmental needs.
* In all local authority settings an early language observational tool is now embedded to assess children’s language and communication needs and development.  This observational language tool has been further developed in partnership with Dundee University to now take into account the language development of children aged two.  This will be rolled out to all local authority settings in August 2024.
* Scottish Government now share data through the DWP to enable FC to target areas where the uptake of eligible two year old places is lower.  This has supported FC to link with families in specific localities to support the increase in uptake of eligible two year old places.
* All children in Fife who are eligible for funded ELC receive the full entitlement of 1140 hours and the Council continues to review this provision to ensure it best meets parent’s needs.
* All children who turn five years from the start of the academic session until the end of February the following year can now have their start to school deferred by a further year.

**Setting equality priorities for 2025-2029**

A workshop with members of the Senior Equalities Group was held on 29th January 2025 to start the discussion around future equality priorities. A workshop with elected members is due to be held on 6th May 2025 to seek feedback on suggested priorities.

The suggested priorities are:

* Access to communication & services
* Inclusive communities
* A working environment where inclusion is prioritised and promoted
* Raising educational achievement & attainment

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| **4.** | **Fife Centre for Equalities** |

Fife Centre for Equalities (FCE) is a local charity, funded by Fife Council, with the charitable aims of raising awareness and understanding amongst all communities and community groups in Fife of equality and diversity.

In 2023/4 and 2024/5, continued to provide access to appropriate information, assistance and training to communities and community groups, in support of fair and inclusive community development and engagement activities across all the Equality Outcomes. Some achievements in relation to the five equality outcomes are as follows:

Outcome 1

Starting January 2023 and throughout 2023-2024

FCE worked with the Fife Council Transport Strategy consultation to gather the views of service users, practitioners and members of the general public in Fife. Initiating the process with an in-person consultation event at St. Luke’s in Glenrothes with 20 participants in person, using feedback to adapt questions and prepare the survey campaign through online forums, social media, WhatsApp’s and word of mouth networks. FCE service users were also supported to respond where required, leading to a good take up (1335 total responses, of which 180 said they have a disability and 33 were from an ethnic minority background) and considerable data to inform the strategy.

Under this outcome, FCE also piloted from February 2024 monthly open-ended engagement sessions (Get Togethers), where participants were provided with guidance and advice on services and information so that they were accessible to them, targeting Fifers who face barriers through disability, language and digital exclusion. This pilot completed in December 2024 and is now a new National Lottery Community Fund project (Fife Inclusion Network) with monthly meetings and casework support. FCE is also continues to providing support for the BSL Plan by hosting and promoting Deaf Support Service BSL videos for Fife Council Reception Staff on FCE’s media website and YouTube channel. Description videos for member community groups and organisations of the Fife Equalities Forum are in production from February 2025 to widen information about diverse community-based services.

Outcome 2

FCE promoted engagement and consultations from the FVAWP programme to members of the Fife Equalities Forum and Get Togethers participants, supporting and encouraging participation from minority groups in 16 Days of Activism Campaign and by widening awareness in discussions around gender equality (e.g. Book Events with authors of ‘The Petriarchy’ and ‘Lads’) and by hosting International Women’s Day events aimed at community building. From 2025, IWD events at FCE moved to being mixed-sex event, with attendees and guest speakers engaging in discussion on how to work together to progress gender equality, as well as provided women-only spaces.

Outcome 3

FCE continued to support participation in consultations, using the approach taken in the LTS consultation - breaking down complex questions in components, avoiding jargon and systematically using plain English. Key FCE achievement under this outcome was the Human Rights Bill for Scotland Consultation from June to October 2023. The original document was adapted for online, in person and discussion/workshop format. The FCE workshop took place in September 2023 with notetakers, interpreters and advocates for 23 participants with multiple barriers including learning disability, sight impairment and language barriers. Responses from the workshop featured in the analysis published by the Scottish Government / Alma Economics in January 2024.

Outcome 4

FCE followed on from the February 2023 survey and in-depth interviews for insights on barriers to minority ethnic recruitment and retention with an independent review in July 2023 of Fife Council’s Diversity Inclusion Policy, and in September 2023 with EDI framework recommendations based on the LGA Equality Framework from Local Government. From October to February 2024, FCE hosted an employability student (in partnership with FVA) focussing on applications of Disability Passports to support neurodivergent jobseekers and produced an initial guiding briefing based on Lived Experience.

Outcome 5

FCE provided equality diversity and inclusion training and workshops to the Education Extended Leadership team, which were disrupted due to strikes at the end of FY22-23. FCE worked with partners from the Fife Afro-Caribbean Network and Fife Equalities Forum to prepare a presentation to just over 100 headteachers in Fife at the Fife Equality and Sustainability Conference in May 2024. Feedback from the workshop also helped share FCE’s engagement programme including a Get Together themed on Black History Month in October 2024 and continued involvement of new minority ethnic projects in the forums (e.g. Africans in Fife, ADELPHE) with FCE.