Reducing Inequality and Promoting Fairness

(2025 – 2029)

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| **1.** | Introduction |

The Equality Act 2010 sets out the public sector general equality duty requiring public authorities to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations. These requirements apply across the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership. The Scottish Government also introduced specific duties requiring Councils to publish every four years a set of Equality Outcomes by 30 April and publish progress towards the outcomes every two years.

This document presents the Council’s next four years equality priorities covering the period 2025-2029 building on the previous outcomes set in 2021 and highlights some achievements over the past four years. These priorities are not meant to encompass all the work the Council does to reduce inequality but set out what are considered to be the priorities. In section 5 of this document, therefore, as well as setting out future priorities, we have also highlighted some mainstream work taking place across the Council which aims to reduce inequality and promote fairness.

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| **2.** | Legal 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. Public sector authorities must comply and implement the public sector equality ‘general duty’ which has three parts:

* 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.

**Scottish Government approach to outcome setting**

The Scottish Government had intended to review the public sector equality duty ahead of the April 2025 deadline to revise and set equality outcomes up to 2029. In June 2024, the Minister for Equalities wrote to all local authorities to explain that following a consultation on the PSED in 2021, responses mostly indicated that the Scottish Government take on more of a leadership role in setting national equality outcomes, which would in turn inform the outcomes of listed authorities. The Minister advised that the Scottish Government aligns its policy and delivery work to the National Performance Framework (which sets out Scotland’s wellbeing framework). The revised NPF is due to be published in early 2025 – at the time of writing it has yet to be published.

The Minister concluded that pending publication of the NPF and as required by the PSED, local authorities set their equality outcomes for 2025-2029 and publish these by April 2025.

**Scottish Government proposed legal duty on inclusive communication**

The Scottish Government had been considering how best to advance the use of inclusive communication across the public sector in Scotland, and scoping the possibilities for regulating this area. In a letter dated August 2024, the Minister for Equalities advised that, before introducing any legislation, officials will initially be trained in better inclusive communication practices, the Government would undertake a scoping of existing tools and practices in this area and thereafter provide more information, guidance, tools and materials for listed public authorities.

**United Nations Covenant on the Rights of the Child**

The UNCRC officially became incorporated into Scottish law on Tuesday, 16th July 2024. This means that children’s rights will now be at the heart of decision making in Scotland as the Act comes into force. The Act requires public authorities to protect children’s human rights in their decision-making when delivering functions conferred by Acts of the Scottish Parliament. It also allows for children, young people and their representatives to use the courts to enforce their rights. The Act aims to mainstream the participation of children and young people in decision making across society and means that public authorities and their employees who work with or indirectly support children, now have a legal duty to uphold children's rights as set out in the UNCRC.

**Human Rights Bill**

In June 2023, the Scottish Government undertook a consultation on the Human Rights Bill which would enshrine international human rights – including the right to health and an adequate standard of living – into Scots law for the first time. The proposals would reduce inequality and place a broader range of human rights at the centre of how Scotland’s frontline public services were delivered, as well as its policy and law making processes. People would also be able to seek justice where their rights are not upheld.

Legislation would incorporate United Nations economic, social, and cultural rights and environmental standards, as well as rights relating to women, disabled people and people who experience racism.

Fife Council submitted a response to the consultation. At the time of writing, there is no further update on the Bill and its development.

**Gender Recognition Bill**

The Scottish government wanted to simplify and speed up the existing process by which people obtained a gender recognition certificate – the legal recognition of a trans person's "acquired" gender. The process would have been shortened from two years and no medical reports or diagnosis would have been required as long as the person had lived in their acquired gender for three months. However, the UK Government vetoed the Scottish Government Gender Recognition (Reform) Bill in December 2022.

For Women Scotland was one of the organisations opposing the Scottish Government Bill arguing that sex-based protections should only apply to people who are born female. Campaigners were concerned that allowing anyone to "self-identify" as a woman could impact on the rights women have fought for decades to secure, and which are themselves enshrined in equalities law. There were also concerns about access to women-only spaces and services, including hospital wards and refuges.

On 15th April 2025, the UK Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the terms woman and sex in the Equality Act 2010 refer to a biological woman and biological sex. The court stressed, however, that the law still gives protection against discrimination to transgender people. The Scottish Government has accepted the judgement and it is expected that the Equality and Human Rights Commission will be issuing clearer guidance for public authorities in 2025 following the ruling. More information about the judgement can be found [here](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvg7pqzk47zo).

**Equality & Human Rights Commission**

In March 2025, the EHRC published their [strategic plan 2025-2028](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/about-us/our-strategy/strategic-plan-2025-2028#foreword-from-our-chairwoman) setting out priorities to protect and promote equality and human rights. The priorities over the three years are:

* Core regulation of equality and human rights
* Agile response to equality and human rights risks and opportunities
* Programmes focused on complex equality and human rights challenges

There are two particular actions the EHRC will take in relation to the priorities which are relevant to the Council’s equality priorities:

* assessing serious threats to equality and human rights, for example ensuring AI does not lead to discrimination on the basis of race;
* Where there are heightened tensions between different groups in society, the EHRC will increase national and local governments and PSED duty bearers’ understanding of how best to respond e.g. freedom of expression and the interaction between the protected characteristics of sex and gender reassignment.

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| **3.** | Evidence Gathering & Analysis  |

**Profile of Fife’s Communities**

Scotland’s census collection phase took place between 28 February and 1 June 2022. Highlighted below is information from the census in relation to the protected characteristics, and how this has changed between 2011 and 2022.

* Fife’s population is estimated at 371,781 as of Census Day 20 March 2022, an increase of 1.8% since 2011.
* Fife’s **age** structure continues to change, with fewer children (-2,552) and working age people (-6,821) than in 2011, and significant increases in its older population (+15,939). Since 2011, older people have overtaken the number of children, and in 2022, this gap continues to increase at a faster rate.
* In relation to **sex**, females make up 51.6% of Fife’s population, while males make up 48.4%, similar to the overall proportions for Scotland. There continues to be a generally higher proportion of males than females for those people aged 0-20, but by their early 20s females make up a higher proportion of the population, and for females aged over 85, they significantly outnumber males.
* One of the biggest changes to **household** size is the increase in single person households, which are now almost as common as two person households. For people aged 55 and over, just under two-thirds (63.7%) live alone in Fife in 2022. Older people are more likely to live alone than younger people, with only 3.4% of those aged 16-24 living alone.
* In terms of **Marriage and Civil Partnership**, the census shows a gradual shift from marriage or civil partnerships towards cohabiting. The number of cohabiting couples went up by 15.8% from 2011, while married or civil partnership couple households decreased by 9.6%.
* **Sexual orientation** was a voluntary question for people aged 16 and over. There were 11,919 LGB+ people (4.0%) aged 16 and over, similar to Scotland. There are more LGB+ people in younger age groups than in older groups.
* **Trans status** or history. There were 1,294 trans people in Fife (0.4% of people aged 16 and over), similar to the Scottish average. Just under 44% of Fife trans people identify as ‘non-binary’, slightly lower than the Scotland figure of 45%. 17% of trans people identified as trans men, while 15% identified as trans women, and 15% did not specify their trans status or history, similar to the Scottish average.
* In relation to **disability** and health, 289,322 (77.8%) said that their health was good or very good. This is a decrease from 2011 of 9,569 people. In 2022, 95,552 Fife people said that they had a health problem or disability that limited their day-to-day activities either a little or a lot, an increase of 21,306 over the decade. Nearly one in four people in Fife (23.4%) reported having a long-term illness/condition, higher than the Scottish average of 21.4% with mental illness having increased from 4.1% in 2011 to 11.9% in 2022, and most commonly in younger people.
* The majority of Fife people identified their **ethnic group** or background as “White” (96.0%), although this has fallen from the previous census from 97.6%. The percentage of people in Fife with a minority ethnic background increased from 2.3% in 2011 to 3.9% in 2022. This is lower than the Scottish average of 12.9%.
* In relation to **country of birth**, the percentage of people living in Fife that were born outside the UK increased from 2.8% to 4.2% between 2011 and 2022. The largest increases were from European Union (EU) Accession countries (0.8%), other EU countries (0.5%), the Middle East and Asian countries (0.4%), and the Americas and Caribbean countries (0.3%).
* Whilst the census does not ask directly about **pregnancy and maternity**, the trend over time is for a reduction in the number of children born in Fife. Compared with Scotland (45.4%), Fife (37.6%) has a lower proportion of births to parents that are married.
* **National Identity** The percentage of people who said “Scottish” was their only national identity increased from 63.8% in 2011 to 68.5% in 2022 (above Scottish average of 65.5%). School aged children (4-17) had the highest levels of Scottish identity, followed by those aged 25-34, with males and females showing similar levels for Scottish identity. Those who said that their only national identity was British increased from 7.9% in 2011 to 13.3% in 2022.
* **Language** In 2022, 94.6% of people in Fife said they speak, read and write English. Of the people in Fife aged 3 and over, 1.3% had skills in Gaelic in 2022, an increase from 0.7% in 2011. In the same age range, the percentage of people in Fife with no skills in Scots language has increased from 42.4% in 2011 to 50.9% in 2022.
* The 2022 Census included a new question on the use of **BSL**, therefore, no comparable data is available for the previous censuses. For those aged 3 and over in the Fife population, 7,947 (2.2%) use British Sign Language (BSL), similar to the Scottish average. People in the 30 to 60 age groups have the highest levels of use of BSL.
* In relation to **religion and belief**, for the first time, the 2022 Census figures show that the majority of people in Fife said that they had “No Religion” (61%), increasing from 46% in 2011. This is higher than the Scottish average of 51%.

**Fife Strategic Assessment**

The [Fife Strategic Assessment](https://know.fife.scot/__data/assets/pdf_file/0033/609729/Fife-Strategic-Assessment-2024-Final.pdf) was completed in July 2024 setting out a snapshot of the state of Fife and providing an insight into challenges facing the area across a number of areas. The report states that whilst the Plan for Fife has a strong focus on reducing inequalities, despite interventions, inequalities still persist and are widening. Some of the key points worth noting from the report in relation to equality and diversity are highlighted below.

* The gap is widening over time in relation to key life outcomes such as life expectancy and school attainment and there are significant inequalities in outcomes between most and least deprived communities.
* As people in Fife are living longer, they are living with ill health for longer and this is particularly so for women. There is also an increased risk of digital exclusion and poor digital literacy in older people as more services move online.
* Community perceptions of place are going in the wrong direction over time with more improvement and resources needed in areas such services and support, and work and local economy, housing and community.
* A common thread throughout the assessment has been poverty and inequality felt locally caused by wider economic factors.
* The long-term impacts of poor educational outcomes for children and young people include a reduction in further and higher education, limited employment opportunities and earning potential and poor health outcomes leading to poverty and inequality.

**Employee Data**

The data in this section provides a snapshot of our workforce profile as of 9th September 2024.

The headcount for the whole Council was 18,405. In relation to the protected characteristics, the following key facts can be noted.

* Age Employees aged 55 and over make up 26.21% of our total workforce. The percentage of our workforce aged 24 and under has increased from the last reporting period (4.2% 2022 to 5.9% in 2024). The age group 24-29 has also marginally increased in the same time period (8.1% 2022 to 8.3% in 2024) so this could be an indication we are attracting more younger applicants.
* Gender The gender split has remained relatively static with females making up 72.1% of our workforce (72.9% in 2022).
* Disability The percentage of our workforce declaring a disability has increased from 1.79% in 2022, to 3.2% in 2024.
* Ethnicity 1.5% of our workforce have told us that they are from an ethnic minority\* (excluding white minority) background. This protected characteristic has a higher percentage of people choosing the option “prefer not to say” than all other protected characteristics (17.6%) so we are still unsure of how accurate our ethnicity demographic information is.

More information about our duties as an employer can be found in the [Equality and Diversity Employment](https://www.fife.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0036/671976/Equality-and-Diversity-in-Employment-Report-2025.pdf) report.

**Fife Centre for Equalities Engagement Report 2023/2024**

FCE is funded by Fife Council to engage with individuals and groups representing the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Over 2023 and 2024, FCE engaged with and analysed information received from individuals relating to concerns or issues when accessing Council services. Highlighted below are some of the concerns raised:

* The most common concerns individuals shared with FCE were experiences of discrimination, hate incidents or difficulty in gaining accessible information. This related mainly to disability (mental health and anxiety) and race (poverty and cost of living concerns).
* Inability to access relevant Fife Council information (particularly around long-term support and benefit assessments) and services due to language barriers.
* Digitally excluded individuals struggling to access Fife Council services with many being online-only – consultations were specifically mentioned. It was also noted that the digitally excluded population does not have the same access to participation due to lack of awareness of ongoing campaigns and possibilities to participate.
* There is generally good support for those looking to access support for speakers of other languages.

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| **4.** | Update on Equality Outcomes 2023-2025 |

In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Council published a two year progress against the [2021-2025](https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/council-and-democracy/equality%2C-diversity-and-human-rights) outcomes and this is available [online](https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/council-and-democracy/equality%2C-diversity-and-human-rights). The section below completes the final two year progress and outlines some key achievements over 2023-2025.

**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 – 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.

**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/__data/assets/pdf_file/0036/671976/Equality-and-Diversity-in-Employment-Report-2025.pdf) 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.

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| **5.** | Equality Priorities 2025-2029 |

Section 4 set out some achievements against the 2021-2025 outcomes and particularly focussing on the latter two years. The outcomes were set during the pandemic and therefore services were being delivered against that backdrop. The focus was on providing critical services to vulnerable people and mostly focussing on online delivery where possible due to covid restrictions.

The impact and learning from covid resulted in some post pandemic changes. Highlighted below are some key takeaways from Sections 2 and 3 which have influenced the setting of our future equality priorities.

* More services are being delivered digitally to enable people to self-serve which may impact on people who are digitally excluded or unable to go online because of communication barriers.
* The profile of Fife’s population has changed – people living longer but with poorer quality of life; people born outside the UK has increased and there are now more New Scots who have settled in Fife.
* Fife’s population has increased slightly with more older people living longer but with a reduced quality of life and requiring more care, an increase in single person households and fewer children and working age population.
* The 2022 census has also shown a change in the ‘New Scot’ population with more people showing as having being born outside the UK and a slight increase in the ethnic minority population. There was also an increase in the disability population across all age groups and disability types including mental wellbeing.
* In terms of legislative changes, the Scottish Government has been consulting on the Human Rights Bill and provided updates on the proposed review of the Public Sector Equality Duty, Inclusive Communication and lost the appeal to reform the Gender laws. At the time of writing, there is no definitive change to the legislation which applies to the public sector and the previous requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty still apply and these were set out in Section 2.

The priorities set out below have therefore been set in the context of available evidence and information and the way the Council is proposing to shape its services for the future. There is also reference to other mainstream equality related work which is taking place across Council Services and partnerships which is worth noting.

**Priority 1: Access to Communication & Services**

**Why we have prioritised this**

Services are increasingly going on-line to enable citizens to ‘self-serve’. Whilst this is an advantage for most people who have access to and are able to go online to obtain services, this is not an option for some communities including people whose first language is not English, British Sign Language users, people who are on low income and not able to afford a digital device.

Related to the provision of online services, the Council provides translations of documents in alternative formats including BSL and community languages. Whilst we continue to provide documents in different formats on request, changes to technology will allow the Council to trial and use a machine readable translation app. Whilst not useful for types of documents, the translation app can turnaround translated documents much faster as well as saving money.

The Council has previously undertaken equality impact assessments on changes to policy and practice and where appropriate, these have been published as part of the committee reporting process. There is now an increasing number of legal requirements to assess impact in a range of areas including in relation to equality, socio-economic disadvantage, consumer duty, climate impact and children’s rights. It therefore makes sense to combine the range of assessments into an integrated impact assessment. The Council will be moving to this approach in the first year of our revised equality priorities. This combined approach will enable the Council to assess the impact of our decisions in relation to policy but also when making future budget decisions.

**How we will achieve this**

* Carry out integrated impact assessments on policy and budget changes to inform our decision-making
* Assess the cumulative impacts of connected decisions such as our annual budget setting process
* Work with Fife Centre for Equalities to get feedback from people on the types of communication methods which work for different communities
* Trial and progress a machine readable translation app for routine and non-personal document translations
* Actively seek feedback about people’s experience of using our services to improve how services are delivered

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| *This priority will eliminate discrimination, harassment and bullying; foster good relations and reduce socio-economic disadvantage* |

**Mainstreaming equality & diversity**

**Information in alternative formats**

The Council continues to provide community language translations and transcriptions on request through the Scottish Government Translation Framework (at the time of writing). British Sign Language interpreters are provided through Deaf Communications Service and EasyRead document provision also on request. Committee and Council meetings are also equipped with hearing loops to support anyone who is hard of hearing.

**Fife Violence Against Women Partnership** Fife Violence Against Women Partnership (FVAWP) co-ordinates activity towards ending violence against women in Fife across statutory and third sector organisations. The partnership is committed to addressing four priorities in [Equally Safe – Scotland’s Strategy to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against Women and Girls](https://www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe-scotlands-strategy-preventing-eradicating-violence-against-women-girls/documents/).

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| "Violence against women and girls, in any form, has no place in our vision for a safe, strong, successful Scotland. It damages health and wellbeing, limits freedom and potential, and is a violation of the most fundamental human rights" *(Scottish Government)* |

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

Read more about the work of the [FVAWP](https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/health-and-social-care2/violence-against-women/fife-violence-against-women-partnership-fvawp) here.

**Priority 2: Inclusive communities**

**Why we have prioritised this**

The profile of Fife’s communities has changed the 2011 census. That change has mainly been brought about by ‘New Scots’ making Fife their home. Do we know enough about our newer communities and what their needs are in relation to the take-up of Council services?

On Tuesday 16th July 2024, the UNCRC officially became incorporated into law in Scotland. The Act requires public authorities to protect children’s human rights in their decision-making when delivering functions conferred by Acts of the Scottish Parliament. It also allows for children, young people and their representatives to use the courts to enforce their rights and also mainstreams the participation of children and young people in decision making.

This priority would therefore encourage Council Services to undertake ‘positive engagement’ with all equality communities (including New Scots and children and young people) to inform the planning and delivery of our services.

Communities need to feel safe and included when using public spaces and public services. This includes people with disabilities, gender-specific requirements through use of single / unisex changing facilities.

Tackling Child Poverty priority reports **(**[**Scottish Government, 2021, 2023 and 2024**](https://www.gov.scot/publications/tackling-child-poverty-priority-families-overview/)**)** identified some family types at highest risk of child poverty including lone parent families, minority ethnic families, larger families and families with a disabled adult or child. Improving gender equality also remains a key focus, with 25% of families across Scotland, and 92% of lone-parent families headed by women.

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| *This priority will foster good relations between communities who are able to make their own decisions and use services and those communities who may need some help to do this* |

**How we will achieve this**

* Work with Migration Policy Scotland to better understand the needs of all our communities including New Scots
* Take proactive steps across all Council Services to involve children and young people in decision making
* Promote the use of Citizen Space as a method of consultation and engagement
* Make routes easier and more accessible for people with mobility difficulties & visitors e.g. through QR codes & maps
* Make spaces safer and inclusive to meet a range of community needs including for people with disabilities and gender-specific requirements
* Creating spaces for sharing knowledge, insight and experience between place based communities and communities of interest to build alliances and understanding
* Use feedback from priority families to guide funded public transport priorities between homes, schools and local employers
* Share learning from partners using a family centred and holistic approach to service delivery

**Mainstreaming equality & diversity**

**No Wrong Door**

This is designed to shift the emphasis from providing recurring crisis support to preventing crisis through earlier intervention and prevention.

It's all about compassionate, preventative support that will:

* tackle poverty and reduce inequalities before problems are too big to fix
* shift from service-centric to person-focused services that are designed to address the totality of what's happening in someone's life
* build individual, family and community resilience
* keep people and families well and thriving and prevent or mitigate the need for complex or crisis interventions

**Community wealth building**

Community Wealth Building is a different way to approach improving communities and their wellbeing. Some of the benefits of this approach include:

* Preventing problems when communities are fully involved;
* More of the spend will stay local as our financial power works for our communities;
* Better use of our land and assets to benefit local people and communities;
* Fair employment and labour markets that work for every community

Find out more about the Council’s approach to [Community Wealth Building](https://www.fife.gov.uk/news/2024/community-wealth-building-helping-to-create-a-fairer-fife) here.

**Inclusive engagement and participation**

Between April 2024 and March 2025, Fife Health and Social Care Partnership (FHSCP) achieved major milestones in inclusive engagement and participation. One of the standout achievements was the development of the 2024–2027 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan, shaped through consultation with over 470 staff across all partner organisations. This participatory process helped to build confidence in influencing service delivery and decision making.

To enhance inclusion at the grassroots level, FHSCP and Fife Centre for Equalities, trained 30 EDI facilitators. These facilitators delivered peer-led inclusion sessions throughout Fife, including in Glenrothes, Kirkcaldy, Dunfermline, St Andrews, and Levenmouth. These sessions were accessible and designed to be inclusive, supported by mental health first aiders and British Sign Language interpreters.

**Gaelic Language Plan**

Fife Council’s previous [Gaelic Plan for Fife](The%20Gaelic%20Plan%20for%20Fife%202019-2024%20sets%20out%20Fife%20Council%27s%20commitment%20to%20supporting%20Gaelic%20development%20and%20equity%20of%20language%20in%20line%20with%20the%20Gaelic%20Language%20%28Scotland%29%20Act%202005.) 2019-2024 set out the Council's commitment to supporting Gaelic development and equity of language in line with the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

Gaelic development in Fife is a community-led affair with a range of groups and service providers coming together to create a sustainable network of events, activities and opportunities for Fife’s Gaelic community and those looking to learn.

Examples of opportunities regularly taking place across Fife include: adult learning classes; conversation groups; book collections in libraries; Bookbug and Gaelic Bookbug gifting and early years provision.

Work is underway to develop priorities for the next Plan with a view to publishing it in Autumn 2025.

**Priority 3: A working environment where inclusion is prioritised and promoted**

**Why we have prioritised this**

The Council recognises that as one of Fife’s largest employers we have a responsibility to model fair and inclusive workplace practices. We will use various communication methods to support and inform our employees’ different needs.

**How we will achieve this**

* Increase awareness of alternative formats, assistive technologies, and tools to reduce barriers encountered by employees
* Collaborate closely with Deaf Communications Services to strengthen inclusion initiatives
* Undertake listening sessions with employees to gauge awareness and determine priorities
* Enhance the provision of translation services to improve effective communication
* Access digital inclusion initiatives to promote an inclusive online environment for the workforce
* Create educational resources and campaigns to deepen employee comprehension of the significance of inclusive communication practices

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| *This priority will advance equality of opportunity (including for employees with a disability and staff undergoing gender re-assignment); eliminate discrimination, harassment and bullying; foster good relations; reducing inequalities of outcome* |

The Equal Pay Statement 2025-2029 and Gender Pay Gap information is available in the [Equality and Diversity Employment Report](https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/council-and-democracy/equality%2C-diversity-and-human-rights). The [Fair Work First Statement](https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/jobs-and-training2/working-for-us/fair-work-first) is also available online.

**Mainstreaming equality & diversity**

**Neurodiversity** is a word used to explain the unique ways people's brains work. While everyone's brain develops similarly, no two brains function just alike. Neurodivergent individuals may have conditions like autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and more. Since there's no strict medical definition, other conditions can also be included. The Council can provide employees with assistive technologies to support a range of learning styles, abilities, and difficulties, to support employees to be their best.

**Neurodiversity Natter** was an event co-hosted in December 2024 by FHSCP and Fife Centre for Equalities. Attended by 56 participants, this interactive session focused on how to make work environments more supportive for neurodivergent employees. Key outcomes included recommendations for:

- Sensory-friendly workplace adaptations,
- Clearer, more inclusive communication practices, and
- The introduction of mentorship programmes tailored for neurodivergent colleagues.

These events helped normalise inclusive practices and increase staff confidence in expressing identity at work.

The launch of the **Partnership Equality Network** (PEN) demonstrated how leadership support and peer-led initiatives can dismantle systemic barriers and enhance equity across the workforce. The Network provided:

* A staff-driven space for support and discussion
* A feedback loop for influencing - A launchpad for new initiatives like the planned Neurodiversity Staff Network.

The impact of PEN was enhanced through regular themed newsletters that promoted reflection and learning, including:
- Neurodiversity in the Workplace: <https://www.fifehealthandsocialcare.org/media/k04fp0gw/neurodiversity-3-1.pdf>
- LGBTQI+ Inclusion: <https://www.fifehealthandsocialcare.org/media/noqpt4og/lgbtqi.pdf>
- Pronouns in the Workplace: <https://www.fifehealthandsocialcare.org/media/kn2n2rms/pronouns-in-the-workplace-newsletter-1.pdf>

Recognition for these efforts came in the form of Bronze Level status under the Equality Pathfinders Scheme by the Fife Centre for Equalities, and national acknowledgement from the Scottish Government’s “Improving Wellbeing and Workforce Cultures” initiative as a best practice model.

**Priority 4: Raising educational achievement and attainment**

**Why we prioritised this**

Promoting equality within the Education Directorate is a essential task that emphasises the values of inclusivity, fairness, and respect for all individuals. This commitment involves creating an environment where every child, regardless of their background, has access to the same opportunities and resources, ensuring no one is left behind.

The Education Directorate plays a key role in taking forward the wider aims of the Council by:

* Supporting the delivery of the Plan 4 Fife
* Playing a lead role in strategic planning across the wider Children’s Services Partnership
* Working with and liaising with national partners in education and third sector

The Directorate’s approach is founded on the valuesof:

* Compassion
* Ambition
* Respect
* Equity

Our key priorities for improvement are:

* **Closing the Attainment Gap** for the most disadvantaged
* **Improving Opportunity** for all children & young people
* **Delivering the Promise** for Fife’s vulnerable children & young people
* **Empowering all** through place-based leadership

Within the Education Directorate the core principles of promoting equality are based upon:

**An Inclusive Curriculum**- that reflects the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all children and young people.

**Professional Development** - for educators and staff on equality, diversity, and inclusion.

**Equitable Resource Allocation** - that addresses disparities and meets the needs of all children and young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds

**Supportive Environment** - where all children and young people feel valued and respected.

**Engaging Families and Communities** -to build strong partnerships that support children and young people’s learning and well-being.

**Monitoring and Evaluation** – using data to identify areas for improvement and ensure that all children and young people are making appropriate progress

By embedding these principles and actions into the daily operations of the Education Directorate, we aim to create a more equitable and inclusive education system that supports the success and well-being of all children and young people.

**How we will achieve this**

* Pupils provided with opportunities to understand their own and others cultural heritage
* Improve educational achievement and reduce the attainment gap for individuals with protected characteristics
* Improve educational achievement and reduce the attainment gap for individuals living in SIMD quintile 1 and for the Care Experienced, in support of the National Improvement Framework and the Promise
* Increase the uptake of eligible two-year old places in Fife, in line with Scottish Government stretch aim
* Increase the number of venues and opportunities to support play for families within communities
* Sustain and improve the number of young people from Quintile 1 entering initial positive destinations and follow up destinations post 16
* Improve the number of Care Experienced young people entering initial positive destinations and follow up destinations post 16
* Carry a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment in 2025 reviewing evidence on the intersectionality of known risk factors inform the development of the Fife Children’s Services Plan 2026-29.

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| *This priority will: advance equality of opportunity; foster good relations and reduce socio-economic disadvantage for all protected characteristics including Gypsy Traveller children, ethnic minorities, disabled pupils (including Deaf and visually impaired learners) and those who have multiple barriers to employment.* |

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| **6.** | Procurement Duty  |

To meet the requirements of the specific duty, a public authority must be able to demonstrate that it has had due regard to whether the award criteria and conditions relating to the performance of a relevant agreement should include considerations to enable it to better perform the equality duty.

Applying ‘due regard’ means that when making decisions about procurement, an authority subject to the duty must consciously consider the need to: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations.

Any award criteria or conditions related to the performance of a relevant agreement must, in accordance with the [Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2015/446/contents), be relevant to and proportionate to the subject matter of the contract or framework agreement. The sustainable procurement duty, outlined in the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014, requires that contracting authorities must consider how their purchases can enhance the social, environmental, and economic wellbeing of their operational area, with a specific emphasis onreducing inequality.

The Fairer Scotland Duty, Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010, came into force in Scotland in April 2018. This requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions.

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| **7.** | Engagement & Monitoring Progress  |

**Senior Equalities Group**

The Senior Equalities Group (SEG) - a partnership group comprising Fife Council, NHS Fife, Fife Health & Social Partnership, Police Scotland and Fife Centre for Equalities – oversees the equality and diversity work for the Council. To ensure Fife Partnership is also aware of and able to set and monitor common equality priorities, the SEG will report to the Fife Partnership Leadership Group from 2025. The SEG meets quarterly and will continue to monitor progress against the equality priorities and actions during the life of this document.

In order to develop the current set of equality priorities, a workshop with SEG members and other Fife Council Services a workshop was held on 29th January 2025. Additional workshops with elected members were held on 6th and 27th May 2025. As with the previous equality outcomes document, this document was presented to the Council’s Cabinet Committee in June 2025 for discussion and approroval. Two yearly updates on progress will be provided and published online against the actions in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

**Fife Centre for Equalities**

FCE is funded by Fife Council to broadly work with and engage with individuals and groups who fall under the protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act. The current Service Level Agreement (SLA) which runs from 2024 to 2027 has five components:

* Undertake **qualitative research** to ensure that Fife Council provides services to all protected characteristics based on identified need.
* **No Wrong Door*.***  This is about putting people at the centre of service design and delivery, make it easy for them to access Council services, and find the right support the first time round.
* **Community wealth building** is an economic approach to achieving better outcomes for people, the environment and the economy.
* **Supporting the anti-poverty work and the Fairer Scotland Duty**.  The Fife Strategic Assessment 2024 has identified persistent levels of poverty caused by unemployment, low-paid jobs, inadequate benefits and rising living costs.
* **Inclusive Communication**. Test and identify a range of communication methods to suit the needs of differing communities including (but not restricted to online, Whatsapp, SMS text)

Over the life of the Council’s equality priorities, FCE will engage with all protected characteristics and provide qualitative feedback on the actions to ensure that progress is being made.

**Fife Health & Social Care Partnership - Reverse Mentoring Pilot Programme:**

1. Feedback will be gathered from both mentors and mentees through short surveys and reflective check-ins throughout the programme.
2. Sessions will be reviewed for quality and impact, and insights will be used to shape future EDI initiatives.
3. Learning outcomes through shared experience during the Programme will help shape organisational culture.
4. A final evaluation report will include recommendations for scaling or adapting the programme, post-pilot.