

Item: 13

Policy and Resources Committee: 24 September 2019.

Equality Outcomes – Annual Progress Report.

Report by Executive Director of Corporate Services.

1. Purpose of Report

To update on progress towards achieving the Equality Outcomes for Orkney Islands Council and Education Authority for the period 2018 to 2019.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That, on 9 October 2018, the Council approved the new Equality Outcomes and related action plan for the Council and Education Authority.

2.2.

Progress made in respect of the actions set out to support delivery of the three overarching Equality Outcomes 2018 to 2022, as detailed in Appendix 1 to this report.

It is recommended:

2.3.

That the Equality Outcomes Action Plan be amended as follows:

- The action to carry out an audit of existing work experience placements, modern apprenticeships and graduate traineeships by protected characteristic be amended to include all pathways, to give greater insight into the outcomes for those experiencing barriers into sustainable employment.
- An action to implement the Integrated British Sign Language Local Plan, following approval, be added to replace the previous action which has been superseded with the merger of the Shared British Sign Language Local Plan and the NHS Orkney British Sign Language Local Plan.

3. Introduction

On 9 October 2018, the Council approved the new Equality Outcomes and related action plan for the Council and Education Authority. The action plan sets out how equality and diversity are essential to how the Council operates both as an employer and as a service provider. It sets out how the Council will deliver its Equality Outcomes 2018 to 2022 which are to ensure that:

- People in Orkney have the opportunity to fulfil their potential throughout their life.
- Orkney Islands Council is an inclusive employer.
- People in Orkney have an equal opportunity to access and shape public services.

4. Background

4.1.

The Equality Act 2010 imposes a general equality duty on public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

4.2.

The general equality duty is supported by specific duties which are imposed by the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (the Regulations). The key duties are:

- Report progress on mainstreaming the equality duty.
- Publish equality outcomes and report on progress.
- Assess and review policies and practices.
- Gather and use employment information.
- Publish gender pay gap information.
- Publish statements on equal pay.
- Consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement.
- Publish in a manner that is accessible.

4.3.

In terms of paragraph 4 of the Regulations, the Council must publish a set of equality outcomes which it considers will enable it to better perform the general equality duty at intervals of not more than four years.

4.4.

In terms of paragraph 4 of the Regulations, the Council must publish a report on the progress made to achieve the equality outcomes at intervals of not more than two years.

5. Progress to date

5.1.

Work carried out in the past 12 months spans each of the three overarching equality outcomes and is summarised in Appendix 1 attached to this report.

5.2.

It is recognised that the equality outcomes are long term goals and that the actions relating to these are set to be achieved within a four-year time period.

5.3.

The action plan sets out work that underpins achievement of the equality outcomes. Some of these actions are likely to be achieved in the shorter-term and some will only be achieved towards the end of the 4 year period.

5.4.

It is anticipated that, whilst the equality outcomes will remain the same, the action plan will be refreshed every year to take account of progress under each area and to ensure that momentum is maintained in achieving these outcomes.

5.5.

Eleven of the actions are currently in progress and there has been significant planning undertaken to review and develop resources required to begin progressing three of the other actions.

5.6.

Two actions are yet to start, as detailed below.

5.6.1.

Under the equality outcome: Orkney Islands Council is an inclusive employer, the action yet to start is "Review of jobs appropriate to be undertaken remotely".

- Work on this action will link closely to a number of key themes in the workforce plan which progress this work accordingly.

5.6.2.

Under the equality outcome: People in Orkney have an equal opportunity to access and shape public services, the action yet to start is "Audit existing processes for recording personal information to ensure it is inclusive of gender identity requirements".

- Work will commence on this action following the Gender Recognition (Scotland) Bill due to be published at the end of this year.

6. Corporate Governance

This report relates to governance and procedural issues and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

7. Financial Implications

7.1.

Progress made against the equality outcomes has been undertaken from existing resources.

7.2.

Service specific resources may be required for the further implementation of the outcomes.

8. Legal Aspects

The legal aspects are contained in section 4 of this report.

9. Contact Officers

Gillian Morrison, Executive Director of Corporate Services, extension 2103, Email gillian.morrison@orkney.gov.uk.

Andrew Groundwater, Head of HR and Performance, extension 2253, Email andrew.groundwater@orkney.gov.uk.

Emma Chattington, Equalities Officer, extension 2155, Email emma.chattington@orkney.gov.uk.

10. Appendix

Appendix 1: Equality Outcomes 2018 to 2022 Progress Report.

Annual equality outcomes progress report

Overview

Orkney Islands Council's Equality Outcomes Action Plan published last year, explains how equality and diversity are essential to how we operate both as an employer and as a service provider. It sets out our Equality Outcomes for 2018 – 2022. They are to ensure that:

- People in Orkney have the opportunity to fulfil their potential throughout their life.
- Orkney Islands Council is an inclusive employer.
- People in Orkney have an equal opportunity to access and shape public services.

This report provides an update on our progress against the action plan that will deliver these outcomes, and what we are committing to focus on for the forthcoming 12 months.

Our equality outcomes help us to deliver on our duties under equality legislation.

Introduction

We believe strongly that equality sits at the heart of everything we do – as an employer and as a service provider.

Last year we set an ambitious set of equality outcomes, drawing on local and national evidence as well as best practice examples to set out an action plan that will support delivery of these.

It will take time to show whether some of our actions are having a positive impact and we will monitor how we are doing and learn lessons and change our plans if they are not delivering.

This is our first update on the progress we have made against our four-year equality outcomes. We are committed to ensuring that Orkney Islands Council is an organisation where our colleagues are treated with dignity and respect, building an inclusive culture that enables people to do their best.

Whilst we have made some progress in these first 12 months, there is much more still to do, and we need to maintain our momentum to continue to improve.

People in Orkney have the opportunity to fulfil their potential throughout their life.

Carry out an audit of existing work experience placements, modern apprenticeships and graduate traineeships by protected characteristic.

In progress.

Early work under this action has highlighted a lack of consistent data collection across the organisation and with partner agencies. Whilst there is some good data available, this does not provide a sufficient evidence base in order to evaluate the number of people with disabilities experiencing better opportunities to access sustainable employment.

Work is now underway as part of the skills and employability workstream and an inclusion and diversity sub-group has been established to enable wider partnership working which will be looking at a number of cross-cutting themes. This work will include recommendations on a consistent way in which partner organisations collect and share data relating to all pathways from education into positive destinations and employment.

Following further discussion with key stakeholders, this action will be expanded to cover all pathways rather than work experience placements, modern apprentice roles and graduate trainees. This will give greater insight into the outcomes for those experiencing barriers into sustainable employment.

The inclusion and diversity sub-group is also considering how frameworks and awareness events such as Disability Confident and Learning Disability Work Week can leverage greater change across Orkney.

Revised action: Carry out an audit of existing pathways from education into positive destinations and employment by protected characteristic.

Audit the existing modern apprenticeship scheme by gender and work with stakeholders to identify opportunities for increased promotion of gender balance in particular courses and schemes.

In progress.

Progress in this area is closely linked with the first action and work is underway to develop and embed this theme with the inclusion and diversity sub-group.

Challenge gender stereotypes that influence education, training and career choices through inclusive communication and awareness raising opportunities including national awareness days.

In progress.

Progress in this area is closely linked with the first action and work is underway to develop and embed this theme with the inclusion and diversity sub-group.

Awareness raising particularly around young people in STEM subjects is ongoing and opportunities such as the Orkney International Science Festival with projects such as skyranMOON at Stromness Academy getting staff and pupils involved in showcasing topics in new and engaging ways.

Deliver actions relating to closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children in the Education Improvement Plan.

In progress.

Progress in this area is closely linked with the first action and work is underway to develop and embed this theme with the inclusion and diversity sub-group.

Implementation of Anti-Bullying Policy for our Children and Young People.

In progress.

The Anti-Bullying Policy for our Children and Young People was launched in August 2018 and sets out a strategic approach to addressing bullying and provides clear definitions and guidance for schools and settings to review or develop local anti-bullying policies to address and monitor any incidences of bullying.

Work is now well underway with schools and settings developing their local Anti-bullying policies and baseline data will be established through the reporting mechanisms on SEEMiS. It is anticipated that follow up reporting will see an increase in numbers of incidences being reported in the first instance.

Orkney Islands Council is an inclusive employer.

Review of flexible working plan for ageing workforce and review of sickness absence process to be more inclusive of age-related conditions and mental health of older workers.

In progress.

The development of our HR systems is enabling greater reporting ability including sickness absence monitoring by age groups and by health condition. By the end of the year, the baseline data will be established and will help prioritise the activities and interventions offered to improve flexibility and inclusion.

It is recognised that flexible working opportunities have a significant impact for colleagues with caring responsibilities and as such work to achieve this action will also make explicit reference for this group. This has already been reflected in the recent review of the Capability Policy.

Early work has been undertaken to incorporate resources and services such as the Workplace Mental Health Support Service delivered by Mencap as part of the Access to Work programme, into our Sickness Absence Management process and training. The Workplace Mental Health Support Service is a free service that people in employment can access independently and is designed to support colleagues who have a mental health condition (diagnosed or undiagnosed) that has impacted their work.

Review Employee Survey responses by age to assess baseline evidence and to develop proactive age-inclusive communications, promotion and development opportunities.

Planning.

Any highlighted differences in survey data by age and gender are being fed into the ongoing work to develop the three key thematic areas identified following initial analysis of the overall survey results.

Carry out regular employee surveys.

In progress.

This action will be informed by the outcome from the analysis and actions from the previous Employee Survey responses.

Delivery of Mentally Healthy Workplace Plan and communication plan to increase awareness relating to mental health and wellbeing.

In progress.

The initial phase of Mentally Healthy Workplace training has been delivered and the next phase begins with the updated training being launched in September.

Promotion of activities are continuing to increase awareness of mental good health and wellbeing across the organisation. Activities have included exercise sessions promoting better musculoskeletal health, mental health awareness workshops, mindfulness programmes and bringing back the balance yoga sessions.

Whilst the reduction in work related stress figures are a longer-term goal, work is underway with the HR system development to ensure improved reporting ability to evidence this.

Review of jobs appropriate to be undertaken remotely.

Not started.

This action has not been started yet but will link closely to a number of key themes in the workforce plan which progress this work accordingly.

People in Orkney have an equal opportunity to access and shape public services.

Further develop guidance for inclusive engagement and embed within the Council's Community Consultation and Engagement guide and in-house training.

In progress.

The Council's Community Consultation and Engagement Policy was launched earlier this year, bringing a greater focus on areas such as engaging with seldom heard groups, peripherality and island-proofing and the Fairer Scotland duty to better consider the impact of socio-economic deprivation on groups.

Training sessions are provided by the Consultation and Engagement Officers Group periodically with topics including consultation and engagement with young people, inclusive communications, making meetings accessible guide and mainstreaming participatory budgeting.

Development in this area will identify mechanisms to evidence the wider representation at community engagement events and in consultation exercises.

Prior to an election, review and develop inclusive practices to support participation in the democratic process.

Planning.

Work is underway to review the resources available nationally to better understand what steps can be taken to improve the inclusive participation in the democratic process. Specifically, this includes the guidance from the Electoral Commission relating to accessibility and online resources available from support organisations such as MENCAP and the British Deaf Association.

Audit of existing elected office by protected characteristic and prior to an election, engage with stakeholders to develop an action plan to promote inclusion.

Planning.

Some early work has been undertaken to review a number of national campaigns promoting getting into elected office for particular groups. Campaigns include Scotland's Women Stand and The Parliament Project.

Consideration is now being given to running local sessions to better understand potential barriers into elected office for particular groups. Feedback from these sessions to inform an action plan to address these barriers.

Improve the accessibility of services provided online through the delivery of the Customer Services Platform and Council Website redesign.

In progress.

This action is closely linked to the delivery of the Customer Services Platform project which is well underway. The Council's website has been redesigned taking into account of feedback from service users and staff and has now been launched. This work will help underpin the delivery of the Customer Services Platform as it will be much easier for service users to navigate the website, to book and pay for services and to report problems.

The assistive software enabling improved access to the website and documentation has been updated. Recite Me includes translation, simplifier, screen masking and the ability to personalise the settings to suit individual needs and preferences.

Audit existing processes for recording personal information to ensure it is inclusive of gender identity requirements.

Not started.

This action is closely linked to the Scottish Government review of the Gender Recognition Act (2004). Consultation relating to this review closed in March 2018 with independent analysis of the consultation responses published in November 2018. The Scottish Government has committed to publish a Gender Recognition (Scotland) Bill will be published by the end of the year. The bill will be in draft form to allow for full consultation on its detail and to seek to address concerns which some respondents to the consultation raised.

It is also noted that progress has been made for the Census 2021 with the census (amendment) (Scotland) bill being passed enabling the asking of new questions about transgender identity and sexual orientation on a voluntary basis. These proposed questions will be considered to inform any developments to the way in which we record personal information to enable better consistency for future benchmarking activities.

Development of British Sign Language local plan in partnership with OHAC.

Complete.

The British Sign Language (BSL) Local plan was developed in partnership with OHAC and Orkney College UHI and was launched in October 2018.

Work is now underway to produce an incorporated version of the plan with NHS Orkney, to provide greater cohesion across public sector provision to BSL users and people with hearing impairments in Orkney. This action will remain as part of the delivery plan for the Equality Outcomes so that progress on implementation can be monitored and reviewed.

New action added: Implementation of the integrated British Sign Language Local Plan.

Consult with taxi and private hire car operators and the public to identify any unmet need in relation to wheelchair accessible vehicles and promote a list of wheelchair accessible vehicles on the Council website.

In progress.

Consultation has now been undertaken with taxi and private hire car operators, representatives of persons with disabilities and the public to identify any unmet need in relation to wheelchair accessible vehicles in Orkney.

The results are being analysed and findings and associated recommendations will be presented to the Council's Licensing Committee in October 2019.