



# **CORPORATE EQUALITIES POLICY**

**Revised and updated June 2020**

## 1. Introduction

This Policy is an integral part of the Council's vision of a confident and ambitious Perth and Kinross, to which everyone can contribute and in which all can share. Through our strategic objectives we aim to maximise the opportunities available to our citizens to achieve their potential. Equalities and Fairness is also one of the 5 key themes within the Perth and Kinross Offer.

The strategic objectives of the Council are:

1. Giving every child the best start in life
2. Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens
3. Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy
4. Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives
5. Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations



## **2. Equalities Policy Statement**

Perth & Kinross Council is committed to equality of opportunity both as a service provider and as an employer. The Council values the diversity of the communities in its area and works towards providing services which are inclusive and accessible. The Council recognises that social inclusion and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between different groups can only be achieved by incorporating equalities into the planning, implementation and monitoring processes for all our Council Services. This Council, with all other Scottish public authorities, is legally obliged by the Equality Act 2010 to pay 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment; to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between those people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

By working in partnership to promote equality this Council believes that we will make better use of all available resources. This in turn can lead to increased satisfaction by service users and service providers.

We recognise that discrimination, victimisation and harassment is unlawful and unacceptable and we will take action to prevent this occurring. If this does occur, we will take agreed and appropriate action to deal with it.

This Council also recognises that, when used legally and appropriately, positive action strategies can help to counteract the adverse impact of past discrimination or other causes of disadvantage. We will therefore implement positive action strategies to make our services more inclusive. This is required by the Equality Act 2010 which require the Council to have due regards to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Take steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encourage people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

This policy has been revised following the introduction of the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. It remains compliant with predecessor legislation as unamended and takes account of the Public Sector Equality Duty, stemming from the Act and the Human Rights Act 1998.

The policy should be considered alongside other relevant Council policies, guidance and codes of practice where appropriate but in particular those relating to our duties as an employer.

### **3. Scope of the document**

The purpose of this document is to set out the statutory requirements placed on this Council by the relevant and related legislation. This policy also identifies the strategies we will employ to meet these duties whether we are fulfilling our role as a service provider (or commissioner of services); an employer; a regulator; a planner or a strategic partner.

The policy applies to Elected Members, employees [and volunteers] including staff representatives. Trade Union representatives are encouraged to support and comply with this policy.

This policy will also inform members of the public and relevant regulatory bodies about this Council's commitment to equality of opportunity and set out its roles and responsibilities.

Partners, contractors and all those in the private, public and voluntary sector who carry out Council functions or work, including all those organisations and individuals who supply goods or services to, on behalf of, or in partnership with the Council - will be informed that the Council intends to work in line with the principles stated in this policy. It is intended that they also will adopt these principles as governing principles for the work they carry out with or on behalf of the Council. Compliance with equality of opportunity is compatible with our obligations under European Union rules and regulations, Best Value, Value for Money and other national or local policies and strategies.

This policy enables the Council to put a framework in place to manage the implementation of the policy and related strategies, review progress, monitor outcomes and report on progress. It will also enable the Council to respond to regulatory assessment, for example, from the Scottish Government, Audit Scotland, the Scottish Housing Regulator, Education Scotland, Care Inspectorate and other statutory bodies.

### **4. Equalities Policy Aims**

#### **4.1 Principles**

The main aim of the policy is to enable the Council to comply with our legal duties, and to create a foundation for the management of equality of opportunity at a corporate and service level. Specifically, this includes the General Equality duty from the Equality Act 2010 'to have due regard to the need to':

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.'

The 'protected characteristics' are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage/civil partnership
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

However, the Council believes that our responsibility for equality is wider than just those protected characteristics. Issues such as health, income, gender identity, employment status or housing circumstance can impact on people's life chances and should be considered when tackling inequalities.

The Council was the pilot authority for the Equality and Human Rights Innovation Forum. This key area of work led to the establishment of the Fairness Commission which was a significant initiative for the Council. An independent Commission of 11 individuals, with a broad range of experience, expertise and influence at both national and local levels were appointed by Perth & Kinross Community Planning Partnership (CPP) specifically to learn more about how people living in Perth and Kinross experience poverty and inequality in their everyday lives. The Commission's Fairer Futures Report was published in April 2017 and recommendations have been taken forward within our wider work to promote equalities and tackle inequalities.

The Council recognises the importance of promoting equality to keep people safe in the workplace and in our communities. There is, for example, a link between women's labour market inequality, wider gender inequality and violence against women. As well as working with partner agencies as part of the Perth & Kinross Violence Against Women Partnership (PKVAWP) to tackle a range of issues, the Council believes in the importance of primary prevention by eliminating systemic gender inequality through addressing the attitudes, practices and structures that sustain it. As part of this work, the Council published its Equal Pay Policy Statement in January 2020 stating the commitment to address occupational segregation in its workforce. It raises awareness and understanding of the problems of sexism and gender stereotyping through the staff induction process and a range of training and development opportunities.

The Council acknowledges that a combination of protected characteristics, along with other issues such as health and socioeconomic status, will mean that people experience discrimination and inequalities in different ways. It is important to take an open and intersectional approach to ensure that people's experiences are understood, that they do not face discrimination and that they feel safe as valued members of the workplace and the community.

## 4.2 Assessment of Impact

All existing functions, policies, procedures and strategies that will affect people as service users, members of the public or employees, should be assessed for impact. Assessment for impact is to ensure that the Council understands how a policy will impact on the needs of the general equality duty. This ensures that policies are inclusive and do not cause detriment to people with protected characteristics.

This Council has put in place an easily accessible recording system for its assessments of impact, consultations and monitoring and of any changes made to policies as a result of assessment and consultation.

Our Integrated Impact Assessment Tool (IAT) continues to be used and has been constructed to allow all aspects of Impact Assessment to be readily considered using an online approach through the Intranet. This integrated approach has produced a more accessible, electronic tool which allows an assessment of impact more widely at the point of origin of policies, and allows the equality and fairness impact to be measured at the same time and in the same way as other areas being considered. The Equality and Fairness Impact Assessment (EFIA) Process was revised in 2018/19 and guidance is in place for all staff.

## **5. Management of this Policy**

### 5.1 Implementation of the Policy

The Corporate Equalities Policy will be published and made available for the public, Elected Members, employees, volunteers, partners and those who carry out work, or supply goods and services for or on behalf of the Council.

Statutory Equality Outcomes have been prepared and published, which will set corporate targets for how the statutory equality measures will be achieved. Equality outcomes were first published by April 2013 and have been regularly reviewed thereafter.

Mainstreaming is part of our legal requirements. This means integrating the work on equality into the Council's day-to-day work. A revised mainstreaming report has just been produced at the same time as this revised policy.

## 5.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone working for or with Perth & Kinross Council has responsibilities in relation to promoting equality of opportunity. We will do all in our power to address inequalities locally and take every opportunity to raise issues nationally where appropriate. We will do this in our day-to-day service delivery, our strategic planning, our service support or our partnership work.

Successful implementation of the Equalities Policy will depend on a partnership between the Council and the community and should involve:

- a) **Elected Members** - to comply with the Equalities Policy and to provide leadership and support; to engage with the local community and to provide a scrutiny role. As part of their Scrutiny role for equalities, Elected Members have responsibility for ensuring that reports before Committee identify any relevant equalities implications and clearly indicate how the equalities implications will be addressed. Briefing/training will continue to be provided for Elected Members to enable them to provide leadership and support to encourage compliance with the Corporate Equalities Policy and enable them to develop their engagement with all groups in the local community.
- b) **Executive Officer Team/ Directors** - to comply with the Equalities Policy; to provide leadership and training to staff and support to Members and to enable Services to comply with the Equalities Policy; to oversee and monitor compliance. The Executive Officer Team (EOT) has the lead responsibility for ensuring the equalities policy, legislation and related duties are complied with both in service delivery and employment matters. Directors have responsibility to ensure that the Equalities Policy and related strategies are effectively implemented throughout their Service.
- c) **Employees, Staff Representatives, Contractors and Volunteers** - to comply with the Equalities Policy, to undertake training where appropriate and to challenge unhelpful cultures and traditions and to engage with the community. All employees have responsibilities as well as rights in relation to implementing the Corporate Equalities Policy. Training will be provided for employees, together with guidance and information to enable everyone to positively promote equality of opportunity and good relations between different groups.
- d) **Partners, Contractors and Suppliers** - We will work with partners to ensure good equalities practice is shared and that they adopt the principles of equality to enable them to comply with the law. This will include organisations in receipt of Council funding.

### 5.3 Communication and Consultation

#### Communication

All internal and external communication media will be checked to ensure they comply with the commitments expressed in the Corporate Equalities policy. We will communicate the outcomes we are working towards and progress made to achieve those outcomes. This will include publishing monitoring and mainstreaming information and data as required by law.

#### Consultation

Consultation will be carried out with the public and employees including Trade Unions as relevant, including in relation to the likely impact of proposed policies. Consultation mechanisms will continue to be monitored to ensure that our arrangements for ensuring access to information and services are effective.

### 5.4 Training and Development

Regular assessments will be carried out to ensure everyone who requires it will receive appropriate levels of briefing/training to enable them to carry out their roles effectively and deliver their legal responsibilities in relation to equality. Specific learning opportunities in relation to equalities will consider different methods of training delivery.

## **6. Policy Review**

The Corporate Equalities Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it reflects changes to legislation and case law and as otherwise required ensuring it reflects good equalities practice.