

Agenda Item	21
Report No	HC/66/19

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Highland Council

**Date:** 9 December 2019

**Report Title:** Equally Safe at Work

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer (Health & Social Care)

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Throughout 2019 officers have been working with trade union colleagues and [Close the Gap](#) to progress an action plan designed to deliver against the six standards of the [Equally Safe at Work](#) (ESAW) accreditation programme.
- 1.2 The Highland Council is committed to creating a zero-tolerance culture towards gender-based violence through policy development, training and communication. Gender-based violence affects all aspects of women's lives, including employment. Highland Council is committed to support women to stay in work and access the support services they need.
- 1.3 Leadership plays a crucial role in creating and sustaining a change-oriented organisational culture. Having the genuine support of leaders in advancing gender equality and creating a zero-tolerance culture will send a powerful message to the workforce that this work is a priority. It is essential that the leadership of the council demonstrate commitment to, and investment in, the Equally Safe at Work programme, if it is to support our policy outcomes.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
  - a. Agree that invitations are sought from elected members to champion the work of officers to progress gender equality at Highland Council
  - b. Agree that annual reports are taken to Corporate Resources

Committee to allow elected members to scrutinise and celebrate progress towards accreditation.

- c. Agree that training and information material are made available to elected members both through induction and the member development programme.
- d. Note the progress made to date by the joint officer and trade union working group. (Section 6)

### **3. Implications**

**3.1 Resources** – no implications

**3.2 Legal** - There are significant implications of not managing incidents of gender-based violence in the work place in line with employment law.

**3.3 Community Impact** - Taking a leadership role in tackling gender-based violence will have a positive impact on the experience on all women in Highland communities. A Community Impact Assessment (Equality, Poverty, Rural) will be undertaken of any new or revised policies as a result of this work.

**3.4 Sustainability / Climate Change** – no implications

**3.5 Risk** - A failure to deal with incidents of gender-based violence at work in line with employment law and good practice risks financial penalties, adverse publicity and loss of reputation as an employer of choice.

**3.6 Gaelic** – no implications

### **4. Background**

4.1 The Highland Council is currently working with Close the Gap on a programme to achieve Equally Safe at Work employer accreditation. Equally Safe at Work (ESAW) has the potential to create real change for women working in local government. By taking steps to advance gender equality at work, supporting victim-survivors of gender-based violence and fostering a zero-tolerance culture Highland Council elected members and managers can become leaders on gender equality not only in the workplace but in wider Highland society.

4.2 Equally Safe at Work is an employer accreditation programme developed by Close the Gap. The programme enables employers to better support employees who have experienced gender-based violence and work towards creating an inclusive workplace culture that prevents violence against women.

- 4.3 The programme supports the implementation of Scotland's national strategy to tackle violence Against Women and Girls ([Equally Safe](#)). The strategy, which is jointly owned by Scottish Government and COSLA, recognises that violence against women is a cause and consequence of wider gender inequality. Addressing gender inequality in the workplace is therefore a fundamental step in preventing violence against women.
- 4.4 Highland Council is also a key partner in the Highland Violence Against Women Partnership group, and currently chairs this group. The group has been informed of the Council's involvement with the Equally safe at Work programme and their views sought on aspects of the action plan.
- 4.5 Throughout 2019 officers have been working with Close the Gap, Trade Union colleagues and other pilot Councils (Aberdeen City Council, Midlothian Council, North Lanarkshire Council, Perth and Kinross Council, Shetland Council, South Lanarkshire Council) to progress an action plan designed to deliver against the six standards of the ESAW accreditation programme:
- Leadership
  - Workplace Culture
  - Data
  - Flexible Working
  - Occupational segregation
  - Gender Based Violence
- 4.6 Based on the completion of this action plan it is proposed that Highland Council apply for Bronze accreditation in 2020 and that we commit to an ongoing programme of work to achieve and maintain Gold accreditation from 2021.
- 4.7 The Highland Council is committed to creating a zero-tolerance culture of gender-based violence through policy development, training, communication and an effective reporting mechanism. Gender-based violence affects all aspects of women's lives, including employment, and is Highland Council is committed to support women to stay in work and access the support services they need.
- 4.8 Equally Safe defines Violence Against Women as:
- Physical, sexual and psychological violence including domestic abuse, rape and incest
  - Sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation in any public or private space, including work
  - Commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, pornography and trafficking
  - Child sexual abuse, including familial abuse, child exploitation and online abuse

- So called honour-based violence, including dowry-related violence, female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages and 'honour' crimes
- 4.9 Gender-based violence significantly impacts on women's day to day lives. It occurs in and outside of the workplace and has a drastic impact on women's experiences at work. Domestic abuse is a pattern of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and/or violent behaviour, including sexual violence, by a partner or ex-partner. It affects women from all economic, educational, cultural, age, racial and religious demographics. One in five women in Scotland will experience domestic abuse in her lifetime, and three quarters of women are targeted at work.
- 4.10 Women report experiencing trauma, stress and other mental health problems because of domestic abuse, which affects their work performance due to being distracted, tired or unwell. It can also cause financial instability or loss of employment because of unexplained absences or moving to a new house or job to avoid perpetrators. The effects of domestic abuse are significant, and multifaceted, and therefore affect women's productivity, absenteeism and job retention.
- 4.11 Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, which is intended to, or has the effect of, violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Examples include unwelcome physical contact, sexual comments, inappropriate and sexist jokes and displaying sexually graphic pictures. Women's experiences of sexual harassment are often minimised by colleagues and dismissed as 'banter'. Research has demonstrated that sexual harassment can have serious professional, financial, and psychological impacts. The impact on employees can include:
- Feelings of embarrassment, shame and humiliation
  - A sense of being undermined professionally
  - Avoiding certain work situations include meetings, training courses, or shifts
  - Feeling less confident at work
  - A significant detriment to their mental health
  - Leaving a role or job
- 4.12 Equally Safe, Scotland's national strategy to prevent and eradicate gender-based violence, recognises that gender-based violence is a cause and consequence of wider gender inequality. Women's labour market inequality also sustains, and is a result of, wider gender inequality in society. Addressing women's labour market inequality is therefore a necessary step in preventing gender-based violence, both within and outwith the workplace.
- 4.13 A key cause of gender inequality in the workforce is the lack of quality part-time and flexible work, which erects a barrier to women's progression into higher paid and more senior positions, and results in many women working below their skill level. Women are also prevented from working in jobs

commensurate with their skill level by workplace cultures that do not feel inclusive to them. This represents a loss of female talent and skills to employers, and the cost is high. A review of the evidence of the economic gains of closing the gender gap in employment found that it could add £17 billion a year to Scotland's economy.

4.14 Women are more likely to use public services, and they comprise the majority of the local government workforce and the wider public sector workforce, but they are also persistently under-represented in senior management and leadership roles. Women are less likely to be hired into management jobs, and they are far less likely to be promoted into them. Consequently, women are under-represented in positions of power and authority in Scotland's councils, and elsewhere in the public sector and in public life. For example, women make up:

- 41% of local authority chief executives
- 24% of local councillors
- 16% of council leaders
- 19% of local council committee convenors
- 25% of local council civic heads
- 39% of health service chief executives
- 30% of health and social care joint integration boards
- 7% of senior police officers
- 26% of trade union Scottish secretaries
- 23% of trade union general secretaries
- 35% of Members of the Scottish Parliament

4.15 All research referred to is referenced from the Equally Safe at Work Accreditation Pilot Handbook.

## **5. Leadership**

5.1 Leadership plays a crucial role in creating and sustaining a change-oriented organisational culture. Having the genuine support of leaders in advancing gender equality and creating a zero-tolerance culture towards gender-based violence will send a powerful message to the workforce that this work is a priority. It is essential that the leadership of the council demonstrate commitment to, and investment in, Equally Safe at Work.

5.2 Organisational change starts with leadership. Leaders play a critical role in changing policies, practice, behaviours and attitudes in an organisation. The Executive Leadership Team will support this by embracing and living the following leadership behaviours:

- a. Setting a clear vision for advancing gender equality
- b. Promoting gender equality through our words and actions
- c. Ensuring policies and decisions advance gender equality and tackle discrimination
- d. Ensuring that employees are aware of new policies or organisational

commitments

5.3 It is also proposed that:

- a. Invitations are sought from elected members to champion the work of officers to progress gender equality at Highland Council.
- b. Annual reports are taken to Corporate Resources Committee to allow elected members to scrutinise and celebrate progress.
- c. Training and information material are made available to elected members both through induction and the member development programme.

## 6. Progress to date

6.1 Throughout 2019 officers have been working with trade union colleagues and Close the Gap to progress an action plan designed to deliver against the six standards of the ESAW accreditation programme (see 4.5). Good progress has been made and we are on track to achieve bronze accreditation in 2020 with the stretching goal of achieving Gold accreditation in 2021. Details of progress to date is set out in the summary action plan at **Appendix 1**.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer (Health & Social Care)

Date: 27 November 2019

Authors: J Murdo MacDonald, HR Manager  
R MacKinnon, Principal Policy Officer

Reference: [Highland Council Equalities in Employment Policies and Publications](#)

## APPENDIX 1

**Equally Safe at Work – Summary Action Plan**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Status</b>
1	Prepare and send statement signed by the Chief Executive	Jun-19	Done
2	Prepare and send written statement to all employees	Jun-19	Done
3	Develop ESAW action plan and working group	Jun-19	Done
4	Engage with elected members to build leadership capacity	Dec-19	Done
5	Engage with local multi-agency gender-based violence partnerships	Jun-19	Done
6	Deliver awareness raising campaign -	Jan-20	On Target
7	Collect gender-disaggregated employee data on Composition of Workforce	Jun-19	Done
8	Collect gender-disaggregated employee data on Flexible Working	Jan-20	On Target
9	Collect gender-disaggregated employee data on Recruitment	Nov-19	Done
10	Collect gender-disaggregated employee data on Retention	Nov-19	Done
11	Collect gender-disaggregated employee data on Training	Nov-19	Done
12	Collected data on number of reports of experiences of gender-based violence	Dec-19	Under Review
13	Collected data on experiences of sexual harassment	Dec-19	Under Review

14	Collected data on employee satisfaction with how disclosures are handled	Dec-19	Under Review
No.	Action	Target Date	Status
15	Publish gender pay gap data - Mean gender pay gaps	Jun-19	Done
16	Arrange revised Flexible Working training to sample of managers	Aug-19	Done
17	Update Flexible Working training in management induction	Jan-20	On Target
18	Review job adverts to include Flexible Working statement	Oct-19	Done
19	Review HC Equal Pay Statement to meet standard	Sep-19	Done
20	Review recruitment practice to meet standard	Dec-19	On Target
21	Run recruitment campaigns to encourage apprentices into non-traditional gender roles	Apr-20	On Target
22	Create shadowing scheme for women in non-traditional gender roles	Apr-20	On Target
23	Create shadowing scheme for women in leadership roles	Apr-20	On Target
24	Review and re-launch the HC Mentoring Programme	Apr-20	On Target
25	Review HC Equalities Policy to meet standard	Dec-19	On Target
26	Review Employee Code of Conduct to meet standard	Dec-19	On Target
27	Review employment policy to ensure gender sensitivity	Dec-19	On Target
28	Review equalities training to meet standard	Nov-19	Done
29	Deliver updated training to sample staff group	Nov-19	Done



30	Review inclusion of equalities training in inductions	Dec-19	On Target
No.	Action	Target Date	Status
31	Review Equal Pay audit procedure to ensure compliance with standards	Oct-19	Done
32	Arrange Gender Based Violence training to sample of managers	Aug-19	Done
33	Develop a Workplace Gender Based Violence policy to meet standards	Jan-20	On Target
34	Develop and deliver Gender Based Violence awareness raising campaign	Jan-20	On Target
35	Formalise referrals to support services for victim-survivors of gender-based violence	Jan-20	On Target
36	Develop safety planning guidance to support victim-survivors of gender-based violence	Jan-20	On Target
37	Include support for victim-survivors of gender-based violence in the Employee Assistance Programme	Aug-19	Done
38	Review HC Special Leave Policy to include provision for victim-survivors of gender-based violence	Sep-19	Done
39	Review access to occupational health advice to provide support mechanisms for victim-survivors	Dec-19	On Target

Note: Items identified as 'under review' may not be complete by the end of the pilot. Discussion is ongoing with Close the Gap to address this.

END