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| Agenda Item | 6        |
| Report No   | CP/13/21 |

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Communities and Place

**Date:** 12 May 2021

**Report Title:** Equality Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes Report 2021

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 require listed public bodies including Local Authorities, local Education Authorities and Licensing Boards to review and report on equality work. In 2021, we are required to publish:
- a revised set of Equality Outcomes for 2021-2025;
  - two-yearly progress made towards achieving equality outcomes (2017-2021) for the period 2019-21;
  - information on how equality is mainstreamed in the Council;
  - annual employee information including the progress made in gathering and using the information to better meet the duties of the legislation; and
  - update pay-gap information and review the Council's Equal Pay Statement.
- 1.2 Key areas of progress against the Council's Equality Outcomes includes:
- Different ways of working were established during Covid-19 to ensure access to foreign language and BSL interpretation were maintained.
  - The Licensing Committee agreed to the introduction of a wheelchair accessible taxi policy in January 2020.
  - Addressing isolation and providing access to services and support through digital means during Covid for groups including women and children affected by domestic abuse, disabled young people and families, and care experienced young people.
  - During Covid, the Highland Virtual Academy supported the engagement of learners across Highland who may be particularly vulnerable or disadvantaged due to the pandemic situation. The provision and support of remote learning and digital inclusion in Highland has been recognised as good practice by Education Scotland.
  - There has been a 7% reduction in the gap between school leavers living in SIMD Quintile 5 (least deprived) and SIMD Quintile 1 (most deprived), achieving five or more awards at level 5. (Audit Scotland 2021).
  - The combined gender pay gap has reduced to 5% in 2021, from 5.8% in 2019, 7.2% in 2017, and 9.3% in 2013.

- In 2021, 50% of the Council's Senior Leadership Team (Executive Chief Officers and Heads of Service) are female, this is a significant improvement from 2019 when 37.8% of the Senior Leadership team were female.
- The Council now has over 100 trained Mental Health First Aid volunteers (Mental Health Representatives) compared to 50 in 2019 who can offer support and comfort to any employee experiencing mental health difficulties.
- The Council was accredited as a Living Wage employer in 2019.

1.3 The purpose of this covering report is to introduce and summarise the Council's Equality Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes Report 2021. The full progress report is appended to this document but due to its size can be found at **Appendix 1**.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to consider and agree the Equality Outcome and Mainstreaming Progress Report for the Highland Council (and incorporating the Education Authority and Licensing Board) as detailed in Appendix 1.

## 3. Implications

### 3.1 Resource implications

There are no new resource implications. The actions noted are taken forward within existing resources and reflect the budget for health and prosperity agreed by the Council in March 2021.

### 3.2 Legal implications

The Council, Education Authority and Licensing Board have a legal duty to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty; failure to comply has the potential to result in enforcement action, legal challenge or loss of reputation.

### 3.3 Community implications (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)

The themes and issues in the revised Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-2025 reflect ongoing equality priorities and, along with further actions identified to mainstream equality, will have a positive impact on the protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010. These will contribute towards meeting the three needs of the Public Sector Equality Duty: to eliminate discrimination; advance equality; and foster good relations.

3.4 Progress on the Council's Equality Outcomes will be regularly monitored and as work progresses further consultation and engagement activities may need to be carried out which will help inform how we deliver or adapt our outcomes. A progress report on our Equality Outcomes will be published in 2023.

### 3.5 Climate Change implications

There are no climate change implications arising from the report.

### 3.6 Risk implications

This report addresses the risk of non-compliance, as detailed above. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is responsible for monitoring compliance with the Specific Duties and has established the practice of undertaking reviews of compliance with reporting requirements.

### 3.7 Gaelic implications

There are no Gaelic implications arising from the report.

## 4. Background

- 4.1 The Equality Act 2010 provides protection from discrimination for people on the grounds of nine 'protected characteristics':
- Age
  - Disability
  - Gender reassignment
  - Marriage and civil partnership
  - Pregnancy and maternity
  - Race
  - Religion or belief
  - Sex
  - Sexual orientation
- 4.2 Section 149 of the Act also places a 'general' Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) on bodies such as the Council to give 'due regard' in their work to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and
  - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 4.3 The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 requires listed public bodies including Local Authorities, Local Education Authorities and Licensing Boards to publish information on equality work that contributes towards meeting the PSED. By end of April 2021 we are required to publish information on:
- a revised set of Equality Outcomes (2021-2025);
  - progress made towards achieving previous Equality Outcomes (2017-21) for the two-year period 2019-21;
  - how equality is mainstreamed in the Council;
  - annual employee information including the progress made in gathering and using the information to better meet the duties of the legislation;
  - updated gender pay-gap information; and review the Council's Equal Pay Statement.
- 4.4 Due to the timing of the Council Committee cycle the regulatory body the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has been informed that the publication of the Council's reports will be in the week following the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021 when the papers for the Committee are published and that revisions may be agreed at the Committee.
- 4.5 The EHRC is responsible for monitoring compliance with the Specific Duties and has established the practice of undertaking reviews of compliance with reporting requirements. The EHRC and the Scottish Government reviewed the PSED specific duty reporting obligations in the light of the Covid-19 outbreak. Public bodies must continue to meet the reporting requirement as the PSED remains in place and they consider the requirements to be critical in ensuring that public bodies consider the needs and disadvantages faced by people with protected characteristics as they respond to coronavirus.
- 4.6 There is a growing range of evidence to highlight how people with protected characteristics continue to face disadvantage and for many existing inequalities have

been widened during the pandemic. This evidence is summarised by the EHRC (Scotland):

***In employment:***

- Women, disabled people, and people from minority ethnic groups continue to be under-represented in senior positions. They experience employment gaps, are more likely to be in low paid work, and are under-represented in senior positions. COVID-19 has exacerbated some issues – for example, the reduction of employment for part-time employees has had a greater impact on women
- Young people remain more likely to be unemployed and in low paid work.
- Little progress in tackling employment and pay gaps for disabled people. Disabled people have a higher unemployment rate than non-disabled people.
- LGBT people remain concerned about discrimination at work

***Access to services***

- Older and disabled people are less likely to have access to digital services
- Reduced public transport during the pandemic may have negatively affected some groups that are less likely to have a driving licence, e.g. disabled people, Asian people and young people.
- The loss of social support during the pandemic due to diminished or interrupted care and support has made disabled people, ethnic minorities, older people and children and young people more vulnerable.
- Challenges in recruitment and retention of social care staff has negatively impacted service provision.
- People with a learning disability or autism experience delays in accessing appropriate mental health community services.

***Social inequalities***

- During the Covid-19 there has been a rise in reported domestic abuse and concerns have been raised about survivors' being able to access to support services.
- Adults identifying as LGBT, women and disabled people have poorer mental health and wellbeing.
- Young people and people from ethnic minority groups reported lower levels of trust and belonging in their neighbourhood.
- Racially aggravated crimes were the most commonly reported hate crime and the number related to sexual orientation, transgender and religion increased.

***Education and Living standards***

- Lower attainment and higher exclusions for disabled and Gypsy Traveller pupils.
- LGBT pupils experience high rates of bullying.
- Disabled people, lone mothers and ethnic minority groups more likely to live in poverty.
- Women, disabled people, younger people most likely to experience reduction in earnings as a result of the pandemic.

4.7 While the statistics above reflect national research, a number of these issues have been highlighted in Highland through the work undertaken to date on the Council's participation and involvement framework and work to address these is reflected in the Council's Equality Outcomes for 2021-25 and associated priorities and actions.

## 5. Meeting the Reporting Requirements

- 5.1 The duties to prepare and publish information apply to the Council, the Education Authority and the Licencing Board as each are 'listed bodies' that the regulations apply to. As in previous years, our Equality Outcomes and reporting covers all three 'bodies' and identifies where activity is applicable to each.
- 5.2 The effects of Covid-19 have affected how the Council has met this round of reporting requirements in our ability to gather information and to carry out engagement and consultation, in certain planned activities being postponed or delayed, and in the availability of data. It has also meant that the Council has had to adapt how it delivers of many of its services and to provide new services such as humanitarian support to people who were shielding or otherwise vulnerable or self-isolating – taking account of equality is fundamental to this response. As noted at 4.6, it has also changed the focus of some of the priorities going forward.
- 5.3 **Mainstreaming Equality**  
The Council is required to report on the progress made to ensure that equality is considered as part of its day-to-day work. This means giving consideration to the three elements of the public sector equality duty in our functions as an employer, when planning and providing services and in decision-making. In doing so:
- equality becomes part of our structures, behaviours and culture; and
  - we can evidence how the Council promotes equality and builds it into our performance framework.
- 5.4 Mainstreaming equality comprises section 1 of the Mainstreaming Equality and Equality Outcomes report and provides an overview of how the Council, the Education Authority and the Licensing Board have met this duty during 2017-19. This includes case studies, and highlights areas of future activity.
- 5.5 **Employee Information**  
The Council must publish an annual breakdown of the information collected under its duty to gather and use employee information by protected characteristics and provide details of the progress that it has made in using that information. This information is provided in section 3 of the report.
- 5.6 As an employer, we hold equality monitoring data on 100% of the workforce in relation to the protected characteristics of age and sex however we currently hold less information on the workforce by disability and race, and limited information by the remaining protected characteristics. We have a predominantly female workforce (74%) and there is a high proportion of staff in older age groups. Work is currently underway to improve the Council's equality data gathering of employees through the introduction of a new Resource Management System which will be followed by further analysis and actions identified where appropriate.
- 5.7 **Pay Gap information:**  
The Council sets out its commitments to Equal Pay in an [Equal Pay Statement](#). Since 2013, the Council has been required to publish information on its gender pay gap. This includes the percentage difference among its employees, between men's average hourly pay and women's hourly pay, and is one of the Council's Statutory performance indicators. The Council's pay gap information is published in section 3 and highlights that the gender pay gap overall has reduced to 5% in 2021 from 5.8% in 2019.

## 5.8 **Key Progress 2019 – 2021**

Progress on Mainstreaming Equality and on work towards achieving Equality Outcomes was last reported to Committee in March 2019. The accompanying report at Appendix 1 includes details of the progress made towards achieving the Council's Equality Outcomes (2017 – 2021) for the two-year period 2019 – 2021. A wide range of activities are included in the progress reports. Some key areas of progress include:

### 5.9 Public Attitudes and awareness:

- *In 2019, 81.9% of respondents to the Council's Citizen's Panel survey agreed that Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice, higher than reported in the previous years.*
- *In 2019, 65% of Citizen's Panel respondents selected that they would rather live in an area "with lots of different kinds of people", the highest figure recorded for the past five years.*

### 5.10 Tackling discrimination, prejudice and safety:

- *There continues to be an increased awareness of the negative impact of hate incidents and hate crimes in Highland (Citizen's Panel responses).*
- *Different ways of working were established during Covid-19 to ensure access to foreign language and BSL interpretation were maintained.*
- *The Council worked at national and local level to shape a new employability delivery approach (No One Left Behind). No One Left Behind aims to take greater account of the individual needs of clients.*
- *The Licensing Committee agreed to the introduction of a wheelchair accessible taxi policy in January 2020.*
- *Addressing isolation and providing access to services and support through digital means during Covid for groups including women and children affected by domestic abuse, disabled young people and families, and care experienced young people.*
- *During Covid, the Highland Virtual Academy supported the engagement of learners across Highland who may be particularly vulnerable or disadvantaged due to the pandemic situation. The provision and support of remote learning and digital inclusion in Highland has been recognised as good practice by Education Scotland.*
- *There has been a 7% reduction in the gap between school leavers living in SIMD Quintile 5 (least deprived) and SIMD Quintile 1 (most deprived), achieving five or more awards at level 5. (Audit Scotland 2021).*
- *The Highland Violence against Women Partnership has continued to offer its training programme. Between April 2019 to March 2020, 43 training courses were facilitated, 31 from the scheduled annual training programme and 11 bespoke training sessions. A total of 468 people attended the training.*
- *A new Children's Services Plan has been developed, including interventions from both statutory and voluntary services and commitment to children's rights.*

### 5.11 Employment and occupational segregation:

- *The combined gender pay gap has reduced to 5% in 2021, from 5.8% in 2019, 7.2% in 2017, and 9.3% in 2013.*
- *The percentage of women in the top 5% of earners remained relatively constant over the past four years at between 50 and 52% (51% in 2019/20).*
- *In 2021, 50% of the Council's Senior Leadership Team (Executive Chief Officers and Heads of Service) are female, this is a significant improvement from 2019 when 37.8% of the Senior Leadership team were female.*

- The Council now has over 100 trained Mental Health First Aid volunteers (Mental Health Representatives) compared to 50 in 2019 who can offer support and comfort to any employee experiencing mental health difficulties.
- New Bullying and Harassment guidance has been developed and the Council now has 13 staff trained to support concerns about bullying and harassment.
- The Council was accredited as a Living Wage employer in 2019.
- A new Disability Confident Working group has been established by HR.

#### 5.12 **Equality Outcomes 2021-25**

Public bodies are required to publish a set of equality outcomes, report on progress every two years and review the outcomes every four years. Equality outcomes should set out our priorities for activity that will help to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations for relevant protected characteristic groups. They should focus on bringing about practical improvements in the life chances of those who experience discrimination and disadvantage, and that will help to tackle the most pressing inequalities in our society.

5.13 Public bodies should consider relevant equality evidence and take reasonable steps to involve equality groups. Evidence can include involvement of equality stakeholder as well as national research.

5.14 Due to limitations as a result of Covid, a pragmatic approach has been taken to the review of equality outcomes by refining the aims of previous objectives which are, in any case, tackling long-term and deep-rooted inequalities. This has been carried out primarily through work with a newly refreshed cross-service officer group, taking account of the growing evidence of the impact of Covid-19 measures on equality groups, and engagement and feedback carried out during the pandemic through the participation and engagement framework, including a partnership with Inclusion Scotland, NHS Highland and UHI to explore the experiences of disabled people in Highland during Covid.

5.15 The revised set of outcomes for 2021-25 and initial actions are details in section 3 of the report and are summarised below:

| Highland Council Equality Outcomes 2021 – 2025 |  | Lead Service             |
|--|--|--------------------------|
| 1  | <p>A more diverse workforce that reflects our community</p> <p><i>Priority Activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council Workforce</li> <li>• Employability</li> <li>• Improving employment prospects of Resettled Syrian Families – <i>provisional on funding bid</i></li> </ul>   | Corporate Resources - HR |
| 2  | <p>Identified groups have improved experiences of access to services and greater involvement in service planning, design and decision making.</p> <p><i>Priority Activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved engagement and Involvement for people with protected characteristics</li> <li>• Improved experiences for disabled people to access services:</li> <li>• Improving the lives of Highland's Gypsy / Travellers</li> </ul> | Communities and Place    |
| 3  | <p>In Highland, people from identified groups feel respected and equally safe from harm.</p> <p><i>Priority Activity:</i></p>  | Health and Social Care   |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence Against Women and Girls</li> <li>• Hate Crime and incidents</li> <li>• Reduce prejudice-based bullying in schools</li> </ul>   |  |
| 4  | <p>With Partners in Highland, work to reduce socio-economic disadvantage for people from identified groups in the light of Covid-19 in line with the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan</p> <p><i>Priority Activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income Maximisation</li> <li>• Food Insecurity</li> <li>• Child Poverty</li> </ul>  | Communities and Place (for coordination and pending review)                            |
| Highland Council Equality Outcomes 2021 – 2025 |  | Lead Service   |
| 5  | <p>In Highland, people from identified groups, including young people, will have improved access to the resources needed to support their mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p><i>Priority Activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership activities</li> <li>• Mental Health and Wellbeing action plan (staff)</li> <li>• Integrated Children’s Services Plan - mental health and wellbeing</li> </ul> | <p>Health and Social Care and Education</p> <p>Workforce Lead: Corporate Resources</p> |
| 6  | <p>Staff and pupils have a greater awareness of how they can support equality through delivery of curriculum for excellence and wider school approaches following the principles of the Highland Practice Model and SHANNARI.</p> <p><i>Priority activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff and pupils have a greater awareness of how they can support equality and children’s rights</li> </ul>        | Education and Learning   |
| 7  | <p>Increase the number of young people with protected characteristics leaving school moving into positive and sustained destinations.</p> <p><i>Priority activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing gender segregation and stereotyping within the curriculum</li> </ul>  | Education and Learning   |
| 8  | <p>Reduce attainment and achievement gaps between pupils with protected characteristics and also those living in poverty.</p> <p><i>Priority activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce attainment and achievement gaps</li> </ul>  | Education and Learning   |
| 9  | <p>We will meet the needs of children and families who have experienced interrupted learning – reduce exclusions, improve the attainment of pupils looked after by the local authority, support for children from armed forces families.</p> <p><i>Priority activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of work for interrupted learners</li> </ul>  | Education and Learning   |

## 6 Conclusions and next steps

- 6.1 The Highland Council Programme recognises that Highland has an increasingly diverse population and we welcome people of all faiths, nationalities and backgrounds who wish to live, study, work or visit here. It is one of our strategic goals to protect the vulnerable in our communities, promote fairness and welcome diversity and our aim is



to work with our partners and with our communities to reduce inequality and tackle poverty and discrimination.

- 6.2 We will continue to work with local partners to achieve the above aims including through Community Planning arrangements and the [Highland Outcome Improvement Plan](#) which has a focus on tackling inequality and includes equality of opportunity as a cross-cutting theme. Local partners have a history working together on equality and diversity, and examples of partnership working are found in both the equality outcomes and mainstreaming equality reports.
- 6.3 The full effects of Covid-19 and the associated measures to reduce its spread are not yet known. Consideration of how this has impacted our population, and specifically how it has disproportionately impacted certain groups, will be the focus of work over the coming year. Our priorities and associated actions will need to evolve to reflect the needs of our communities. For example, issues such as transport and digital inclusion may need further consideration.
- 6.4 Other external influences on equality work in the coming years to be mindful of include a Scottish Government review of Public Sector Equality Duty Specific Duties in Scotland, the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into the law in Scotland, and the proposed introduction of a Human Rights Framework for Scotland.
- 6.5 Our Equality Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes Report 2021 show the steps taken to mainstream equality into the work of the Council and to identify priorities. We are aware, however, that this requires continuous improvement in how we embed equality in our activities and decision making; our efforts to raise awareness with staff and members, and also how we take an inclusive approach to engagement and involvement. Key aspects of embedding equality work going forward include refreshed approaches to equalities training and to integrated impact assessments incorporating equality, human rights, socio-economic/poverty and rural/island impacts.

Designation: Carron McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

Date: 24.4.21

Author: Rosemary Mackinnon, Principal Policy Officer – Equality

Background Papers:

[How Coronavirus has affected equality and human rights](#), EHRC

[The Impacts of Covid-19 on Equality in Scotland](#), Scottish Government

[Poverty, Inequality and Covid-19 briefing](#), Improvement Service

[The Impacts of Covid-19 on Equality in Scotland](#), Scottish Government

[Covid-19, Disabled People in Scotland: Health, Social, Economic harms](#), Scottish Government

# **Highland Council Equality Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes Report 2021**

Introduction and summary of progress

Context

## **Section 1 Mainstreaming Equality: 2019-2021**

- 1.1 Leadership, decision making, performance and attitudes
- 1.2 Building equality into our work (services and information)
- 1.3 Engaging and involving communities
- 1.4 Awareness and promotion
- 1.5 Partnership Working
- 1.6 Education
- 1.7 Licensing Board

## **Section 2 Employment Information**

- 2.1 Employment information
- 2.2 Pay Gap Information
- 2.3 Equal Pay Statement 2021-2025

## **Section 3 Equality Outcomes**

- 3.1 Progress with outcomes 2019-2021
- 3.2 Review of outcomes 2021-2025

## Introduction

The Highland Council's Equality Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes Report 2021 details progress on the equality work of Highland Council, Education Authority and Licensing Board for the period 2017-19, and presents a reviewed set of equality outcomes for the 2021-2025.

The Highland Council has made an ongoing commitment to address the three elements of the Public Sector Equality Duty to tackle discrimination, to advance equality and to foster good relations. The Highland Council's Programme recognises that Highland has an increasingly diverse population and we welcome people of all faiths, nationalities and backgrounds who wish to live, study, work or visit here. It is one of our strategic goals to protect the vulnerable in our communities, promote fairness and welcome diversity. We aim to work with our partners and with our communities to reduce inequality and tackle poverty and discrimination and embed equality and human rights across all areas of our work.

This report is set against the backdrop of the Coronavirus pandemic which has highlighted and, in some cases, widened long-standing and deep-rooted inequalities. Our equality work going forward as a Council, and together with our partners and communities will be reviewed and revised as we gain a greater understanding of the impacts of Covid-19 on equality groups and will inform our approach to recovery work.

## Summary of Progress

Progress on Mainstreaming Equality and on work towards achieving Equality Outcomes was last reported to Committee in March 2019. Some key areas of progress since 2019 include:

Public Attitudes and awareness:

- *In 2019, 81.9% of respondents to the Council's Citizen's Panel survey agreed that Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice, higher than reported in the previous years.*
- *In 2019, 65% of Citizen's Panel respondents selected that they would rather live in an area "with lots of different kinds of people", the highest figure recorded for the past five years.*

Tackling discrimination, prejudice and safety:

- *There continues to be an increased awareness of the negative impact of hate incidents and hate crimes in Highland (Citizen's Panel responses).*
- *Different ways of working were established during Covid-19 to ensure access to foreign language and BSL interpretation were maintained.*
- *The Council worked at national and local level to shape a new employability delivery approach (No One Left Behind). No One Left Behind aims to take greater account of the individual needs of clients.*

## APPENDIX 1

- *The Licensing Committee agreed to the introduction of a wheelchair accessible taxi policy in January 2020.*
- *Addressing isolation and providing access to services and support through digital means during Covid for groups including women and children affected by domestic abuse, disabled young people and families, and care experienced young people.*
- *During Covid, the Highland Virtual Academy supported the engagement of learners across Highland who may be particularly vulnerable or disadvantaged due to the pandemic situation. The provision and support of remote learning and digital inclusion in Highland has been recognised as good practice by Education Scotland.*
- *There has been a 7% reduction in the gap between school leavers living in SIMD Quintile 5 (least deprived) and SIMD Quintile 1 (most deprived), achieving five or more awards at level 5. (Audit Scotland 2021)*
- *The Highland Violence against Women Partnership has continued to offer its training programme. Between April 2019 to March 2020, 43 training courses were facilitated, 31 from the scheduled annual training programme and 11 bespoke training sessions. A total of 468 people attended the training.*
- *A new Children's Services Plan has been developed, including interventions from both statutory and voluntary services and commitment to children's rights.*

### Employment and occupational segregation:

- *The combined gender pay gap has reduced to 5% in 2021, from 5.8% in 2019, 7.2% in 2017, and 9.3% in 2013.*
- *The percentage of women in the top 5% of earners remained relatively constant over the past four years at between 50 and 52% (51% in 2019/20).*
- *In 2021, 50% of the Council's Senior Leadership Team (Executive Chief Officers and Heads of Service) are female, this is a significant improvement from 2019 when 37.8% of the Senior Leadership team were female.*
- *The Council now has over 100 trained Mental Health First Aid volunteers (Mental Health Representatives) compared to 50 in 2019 who can offer support and comfort to any employee experiencing mental health difficulties.*
- *New Bullying and Harassment guidance has been developed and the Council now has 13 staff trained to support concerns about bullying and harassment.*
- *The Council was accredited as a Living Wage employer in 2019.*
- *A new Disability Confident Working group has been established by HR.*

## **Legal context and requirements**

### ***Public Sector Equality Duty:***

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a new Public Sector Equality Duty (or 'General Duty') requiring public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

These requirements apply across the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

### **The Scottish Specific Equality Duties:**

The Scottish Government introduced the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations in 2012. The specific duties are intended to enable better performance of the general duty and apply to listed public bodies which include Local Authorities, Local Education Authorities and Licensing Boards. The specific duties include requirements to:

- Report progress on mainstreaming the equality duty.
- Publish equality outcomes and report progress.
- Assess and review policies and practices.
- Gather and use employee 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.

**Fairer Scotland Duty:** From April 2018 the Fairer Scotland (Socio-economic) Duty under Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010 came into force across Scotland, placing a legal responsibility on public bodies, 'pay due regard' to how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions. Public bodies are also required to publish written assessments showing how they have fulfilled the duty. This aligns with pre-existing commitments in the Council to consider poverty and rural impacts.

## **Local context**

### ***Background:***

Highland Council provides essential services in the largest geographical region in Scotland. Covering a third of the landmass of Scotland and with a population of over 235,000 people (mid-year estimates 2018), it is one of the largest employers in the area with approximately 10,000 staff.

Highland has an older population when compared to the rest of Scotland. 21.3% of the population of Highland is over 65, compared to 18.5% of Scotland. According to the Census 2011, 18.6% of the Highland population report having a long-term illness or disability.<sup>1</sup> In 2017, the employment rate for those classed as disabled under the Equality Act 2010 definition was 52.5% in Highland compared to 81.2% of the general working population. This compares to Scotland-wide employment rates of 45.6% for disabled people and 74.1% of the general working population.<sup>2</sup>

Highland has a less diverse population than other areas of Scotland; most people identify as having a 'white' ethnic background. The minority ethnic population of Highland in 2011 was 1.4% of the total, up from 0.8% in 2001, but compared to 4% for Scotland overall. Highland has a higher than average Polish population (1.48% compared to 1.16% in Scotland).<sup>3</sup> The next Scotland Census has been delayed due to Covid-19 but will now take place in 2022.

Pre-Covid some groups of people with protected characteristics were already at a high risk of experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and living in poverty. Disabled people, people with mental health conditions and people from ethnic minority groups are more likely to live in poverty, and women and disabled people are more likely to experience severe material deprivation<sup>4</sup>. The effects of Covid-19 will impact those already in challenging circumstances and are predicted to be particularly severe for people on low incomes, who are more likely to have poorer health and are also more likely to be in insecure work without financial reserves.

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<sup>1</sup> Census Scotland 2011.

<sup>2</sup> [Regional employment patterns in Scotland: statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2018](#).

<sup>3</sup> Census Scotland 2011.

<sup>4</sup> [Poverty, Inequality and COVID-19](#), Improvement Service

## Section 1 Mainstreaming Equality 2019 – 2021

Mainstreaming simply means integrating equality into the day-to-day work of the Council - taking equality into account in everything we do as an employer, when planning or providing services, and when making decisions. The Council, Education Authority and Licensing Board must report on how equality is mainstreamed into their work at intervals of not more than two years.

Mainstreaming equality is an organisational responsibility, requiring leadership and awareness to both promote equality and challenge unfair practices and prejudice. It can be demonstrated through taking account of equality in all our work. In doing so:

- Equality becomes part of our structures, behaviours and culture; and
- We know and can demonstrate how the Council promotes equality and builds it into continuous improvement and better performance.

Previous Mainstreaming Equality reports:

- [Mainstreaming equality and equality outcomes progress report 2017-2019](#)
- [Mainstreaming Equality 2015-2017](#)
- [Mainstreaming Equality 2013-2015](#)

### **1.1 Leadership, decision making, performance and attitudes**

The Programme for the Highland Council<sup>5</sup> presents a vision for an Ambitious, Sustainable and Connected Highland. Protecting the vulnerable in our communities, promoting fairness and welcoming diversity are key priorities, and with partners we have made a commitment to tackle poverty and inequality and explore ways of improving mental health crisis response and suicide prevention.

The Council's Corporate Plan for 2019-22 contains several key outcomes to advance equality, including outcomes to: support older people within communities; transforming care at home services; tackle poverty and inequality; transform the approach to supporting children with additional support needs; improve outcomes for care experienced people; and reduce transport as a barrier to accessing opportunities.

The Highland Outcome Improvement Plan provides a framework for Community Planning Partners to tackle inequality and incorporates equality and inclusion as a cross-cutting theme.

The Council has a range of formal performance reporting mechanisms which refer to progress on equality, including:

- [Council's Annual Performance Report](#)

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<sup>5</sup> [Local Voices, Highland Choices](#) 2017-2022, The Highland Council

- [Annual Public Performance Report](#) – survey not undertaken during 2020 due to Covid restrictions
- [Council and Committee Reports](#)
- [Local Government Benchmarking Reporting \(SPIs\)](#)

### **Summary of performance, attitudes and views**

Key performance indicators Include:

- percentage of women in the top 5% of earners in the Council;
- gender pay gap;
- views on prejudice;
- attitudes to diversity; and
- concerns and awareness of hate crime

**Women in the top 5% of earners:** The percentage of women in the top 5% of earners remained relatively constant over the past four years at between 50 and 52%. The transfer of a significant number of employees to NHS Highland as part of Integrated care means that comparison with other Scottish Local Authorities is problematic. For this indicator the Council has moved from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> quartile of performance. Recent changes to management structures should continue to show improvement in this indicator. Our target is to at least achieve the Scottish average.

| Women in top 5% of earners in the Council | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2017/18 | 2016/17 | 2015/16 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Highland Council                          | 51%     | 50%     | 51%     | 52%     | 47%     |
| Scottish Average                          | 57%     | 56%     | 55%     | 53%     | 52%     |
| Highland Council Rank                     | 23      | 24      | 22      | 17      | 26      |

This indicator is part of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework and as such is included in The Highland Council's reports on Statutory Performance Indicators. More details on our SPIs are available on the [performance section of our webpages](#).

**Gender Pay Gap:** The gender pay gap has improved significantly over the past ten years. The transfer of a significant number of employees to NHS Highland as part of Integrated care, and to Highlife Highland as part of its establishment, means that comparison with other Scottish Local Authorities is problematic. The Council's rank position has deteriorated over the past 4 years and performance remains in the 4<sup>th</sup> quartile. Recent changes to management structures should continue show improvements in this indicator. Our target is to at least achieve the Scottish average.



| Gender Pay Gap        | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2017/18 | 2016/17 | 2015/16 |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Highland Council      | 5.8%    | 5.8%    | 7.7%    | 7.7%    | 8.6%    |
| Scottish Average      | 3.4%    | 4.0%    | 3.9%    | 4.2%    | 4.5%    |
| Highland Council Rank | 26      | 25      | 26      | 24      | 24      |

This indicator is part of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework and as such is included in The Highland Council's reports on Statutory Performance Indicators. The Council also produces Gender Pay reports every two years with the latest for 2021 included in this report. This is not yet included in the LGBF but indicates a further improvement with the Council's pay gap reduced to 5%.

While both of these benchmarked indicators show improvement for the Council over the past four years, the Council continues to lag behind the progress made across all local authorities. For similar authorities (our family group) the Council has a slightly stronger position on the gender pay gap with the family group average at 6.6% compared to the Council's 5.8% for 2019/20.

### Public Performance Survey: Attitudes to Equality, Diversity and Hate Crime

The Council's [Public Performance and Attitudes Survey](#) has included questions on public attitudes to diversity and equality since 2010/11. This allows us to show what appears to be a generally positive shift towards more inclusive attitudes towards equality and diversity in our communities. Additionally, the Community Life section includes questions on awareness of, and understanding of, the impact of hate incidents and crimes, i.e. those motivated by malice and ill-will towards a social group on the basis of disability, sexual orientation, race, religion or faith. The trends shown in this information are used to inform and measure several of the Council's equality outcomes. Progress is shown across all three survey questions.

The Survey could not be completed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Views on Prejudice:** In 2019, 81.9% of respondents agree that Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice, higher than reported in the previous years.

|   | 2019  | 2018  | 2017  | 2016  | 2015  |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice         | 81.9% | 77.7% | 81.6% | 81.6% | 75.0% |
| Sometimes there is good reason for people to be prejudiced against certain groups | 18.1% | 22.3% | 18.4% | 18.4% | 25.0% |

**Diversity in the Community:** In 2019, 65% of respondents indicated they would prefer to live in a place with lots of different kinds of people, the highest reported figure since the survey was first completed in 2011.

| Would you prefer to live in an area... | 2019 | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| with lots of different kinds of people | 65%  | 59%  | 53%  | 56%  | 58%  |
| where most people are similar to you   | 35%  | 41%  | 47%  | 44%  | 42%  |

**Concerns about hate incidents or hate crime and Awareness of the impact of hate incidents:** For each of the protected characteristics, apart from Religion or Belief, in 2019 there is slight decrease in concern about hate crime/incidents. However, the survey indicates that there is an increased awareness of the impact of hate incidents and hate crimes in Highland.

This question was preceded with the following statement: “There is considerable evidence about the impact of hate incidents and hate crimes (as described above) on individuals and communities – for example on mental health, on suicide rates, on risk taking behaviour, on feelings of safety and of belonging, and/or civic institutions.”

Respondents were then asked to select either “yes” or “no” to the following question: “Were you aware that such incidents can and do impact on people in this way in Highland?” with 82% selecting “yes” to this question – higher than any previous year.

| Are you aware of the negative impact that hate incidents can have on people in Highland? | 2019 | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| Yes  | 82%  | 78%  | 73%  | 71%  | 73%  |

**Corporate Performance Report 2019/20:** The Council’s [Corporate Plan performance report 2019/20](#) identifies progress to achieve several relevant outcomes. This includes working with partners and communities to reduce inequality and tackle poverty and discrimination (outcome 3.1), support economic growth and created and protect jobs across Highland (outcome 4.2), working with partners to ensure fewer people experience transport as a barrier to accessing opportunities (outcome 4.5) and promoting the Highlands as a diverse, safe, and friendly place to live, study, work and live (outcome 5.1).

## Governance

Governance and scrutiny of how the Council meets the Public Sector Duty requirements is primarily through the Communities and Place Committee. Relevant matters would also be brought to other committees, for example:

- [Corporate Resources Committee](#) – staffing and welfare reform
- [Economy and Infrastructure Committee](#) – employability, community wealth building
- [Education Committee](#) – Additional Support Needs (ASN), attainment, bullying
- [Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee](#) – social care (disability, age), Mental Health, Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)
- [Housing and Property Committee](#) – Gypsy/Travellers, Refugee Resettlement, access to affordable rented and accessible rented housing.

A recently refreshed cross-service officer group oversees and monitors equality work across the Council, the remit of the group has also been widened to include poverty reduction/socioeconomic work. An Education and Learning Equalities Working group will also be re-established to monitor key outcomes and improvements for children and young people with protected characteristics.

### **Leadership, decision making, performance and attitudes – key actions going forward**

The full impacts of Covid-19 are not yet known and consideration of how this has disproportionately impacted on certain groups will be the focus of equality and human rights work over the coming year. Evidence is being gathered through the Council's framework for community participation and involvement, also reported to each meeting of the Communities and Place Committee. Our priorities and associated actions will reflect this evidence and feedback from equality groups.

## **1.2 Building equality into our work (services and information)**

Council delivers a wide range of services and functions across the largest local authority in Britain in terms of geography, much of which is largely rural. The population of Highland has been rising steadily in recent decades and we have an ageing population which brings with it the likelihood of an increasing prevalence of age-related disability. Highland does not have as diverse a population as Scotland as a whole, with a relatively small minority ethnic population.

Covid-19 has had a significant effect on the way that Council services have been delivered, with an increased reliance on digital communication, meetings and contacts. However, not all services are able to be delivered remotely and adaptations have had to be made. There have also been changes to the ways we gather information and engage with communities, for example the annual Citizen's Panel survey has not taken place, but there has been significant engagement and communication with local community resilience groups involved in humanitarian responses.

The following section provides just some of the examples of how equality is built into the work of the Council

Housing Services monitor and report on equalities aspects as part of our annual Highland Housing Register Monitoring Report. This highlights that our processes appear to be delivering services fairly and equitably. An Equalities Impact Assessment is about to be carried out on the proposed changes to our Housing Allocation Policy.

Equality Impact Screenings and Assessments continue to be carried out when developing or amending strategies, policies and procedures. The Council's Plan to transform homeless services (The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan) identified 12

'equalities focused' actions including improving: engagement; staff and agency awareness and understanding; and understanding lived experiences.

Housing services also actively work to increase the positive housing options and support that we provide to victims of domestic abuse, women and children in particular, both through our landlord actions and our services for anyone approaching us for housing. This includes ensuring that victims of domestic abuse are prioritised for re-housing, if this is their choice, without having to apply as 'homeless'.

### ***Supporting vulnerable groups***

The Council is committed to providing specific support to a range of groups where there are particular needs or service requirements under the Health and Social Care Service, children's disability services, violence against women and girls (VAWG), people with experience of care, commissioning of adult services. During Covid-19 the service had addressed issues of social isolation and ongoing contact, sometimes through digital means for groups including women and children affected by domestic abuse, disabled young people and families, and care experienced young people

The Council has recently committed to ensuring improved outcomes for the Highland's care experienced children, young people and care leavers in line with the findings of the Independent Care Review and an assessment of where the Council is positioned in terms of the work that needs to be done to achieve the aspirations of [The Promise](#). Highland Council is also part of the Corporate Parenting Board with local Partner agencies and a joint Corporate Parenting Board Improvement Plan is being developed.

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/13342/highland\\_council\\_underlines\\_its\\_commitment\\_to\\_the\\_promise\\_to\\_ensure\\_better\\_futures\\_for\\_care\\_experienced\\_young\\_people\\_and\\_adults](https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/13342/highland_council_underlines_its_commitment_to_the_promise_to_ensure_better_futures_for_care_experienced_young_people_and_adults)

A new Integrated children's service plan 2021- 2023 for Highland is being finalised which commits the partnership to upholding the rights of infants, children and young people in ensuring they are protected from unfair treatment (Equality Act 2010) and that every child has the opportunity to grow up to maximise their full potential. A rights respecting approach in Highland will reflect the principles of UNCRC due to be adopted in Scottish legislation into 2021. This provides a framework of expectation and aspiration for what infants, children and young people need to thrive in the day to day and across their lives.

Oversight of equality work sits within the Council's Communities and Place service and includes management of foreign language and BSL interpretation services. The service also leads on Poverty Reduction work, Community Planning, and Community Engagement. Other aspects of the service are more operational but still have a role to consider equality into their work. Our waste collection services have arrangements in place to directly support services through adjustments to the service, for example by providing an additional bin to meet the needs of larger families or household where a medical condition creates additional waste. Assisted backdoor collection can also be provided where a householder's disability or long-term condition makes it difficult for a bin to be presented for collection in the normal way at the kerbside.

This is particularly helpful to older residents and those living with long-term physical or mental disabilities.

### ***Learning and Development - Equality***

Learning and Development is another aspect of the Council that has been significantly affected by Covid-19. With an experienced in-house team, many of the Council's training courses had been delivered face-to-face in group sessions. Delivery of courses has required to be adapted – a process that is continuing. Prior to March 2020, the Council in partnership with NHH had delivered a successful one-day training course to staff from both organisations. This was unable to continue, and work will be undertaken to revise how equality and human right training is developed and delivered for the Council.

### **Case study - HR services support Mental Health/Wellbeing**

Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of staff has been a priority for the Council prior to Covid-19, and which has since intensified. Several wellbeing resources have been developed over the last year, some to provide support more specific to those staff who continue to work from home, away from their usual workplace, manager and teams. It is important that all staff continue to stay and feel connected.

- **Homeworking Guidance** has been developed including information on the wellbeing support resources available for staff.
- The **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** was implemented in March 2020. This was slightly earlier than planned and coincided with the first lockdown. The EAP offers free and confidential 24/7 support for staff and their family members. Staff can access mental Health advice and counselling as well as a number of support resources in relation to topics which can impact Wellbeing – Health & fitness, Elder Care support, parent coaching, cancer and autism support, legal, financial and consumer information and international employee support.  
There has been wide promotion of the EAP via recent CEX, ECO and area staff engagement sessions, and in the Staff Connections briefing to help ensure staff are aware of the support available.
- The Council's 100+ strong team of **Mental Health Representatives (MHRs)** continue to offer initial support to any staff who may be experiencing mental health/wellbeing issues. MHRs will listen, offer reassurance and signpost to appropriate services (both within and outwith the Council). The team continues to grow with 32 additional staff completing training virtually during the last year.
- MHRs have also undertaken additional **“Supporting Anxious Colleagues”** training which covers a range of issues (identified via staff feedback to the HR helpline) e.g. staff feeling anxious about the pandemic and how it affects them and their family members, feeling isolated as they are away from normal workspaces and colleagues and, anxiety about returning to workplaces in the

future. The training is now also available to all staff. This will help address findings from the **Staff Wellbeing Survey** conducted in May 2020 where 12% of employees require further support to aid their mental health.

- Learning and Development have run several tailored (Teams) sessions and toolbox talks to support staff dealing with bereavement, including bereavement due to suicide.
- My Online Learning resources continue to be available covering Mentally Healthy Workplaces and Stress Awareness. A new **Preparing for a new Normal** suite of modules has been developed including a mandatory module for managers in relation to engaging with staff and understanding requirements going forward in preparation for new ways of working and, an **Effective Homeworking** module covering health, safety and wellbeing issues relating to continued homeworking.
- **Café Connect** ran weekly throughout the winter months encouraging and providing staff the opportunity to take some time out in their Friday to connect with colleagues, either those they would ordinarily work alongside or otherwise connect with.
- A **Staff Armed Forces Policy** and supporting information defines our obligations towards all employees who are ex- members of the Armed Forces (and their families) and the Highland Council supports the Armed Forces Covenant which is a promise to ensure that those who serve or who have served, and their families, are treated fairly. Training sessions have taken place with Volunteers have been trained to become Armed Forces Mentors who are now available to respond appropriately to the challenges faced by ex-service personnel and their families.

### **Case study – Highland Coastal Community Fund Awards**

Project applications to the Highland Coastal Communities Fund (HCCF) are administered by the Infrastructure and Environment Service and are assessed prior to a decision by Members on whether to award funding or not. Part of this technical assessment also includes assigning a RAG (red/amber Green) status to key criteria – one of which is equalities. To be eligible for HCCF funding all applicants are required to have considered equalities issues/impacts and this is covered in the application form.

As part of the technical assessment of the project key policies are looked for and this would include an equal opportunities policy or similar. Where an applicant group does not have this in place then we would either include this as a recommendation or specific condition of funding that one is developed.

### **Case study - New Ways of Working project**

The 2-year project set up to explore new ways of working, has initially developed a staff survey to; engage with all staff, seeking feedback regards their health and wellbeing and, to identify how they feel their working life has been over the last year. The survey includes questions on preferred ways of working going forward; how the organisation can better support staff returning to 'a new way of working'; and what this may look like for different groups of staff. It was important to ensure that in developing the project scope and profile we are able to reach all staff and understand specific impacts for staff with protected characteristics.

The opportunities for new ways of working include flexible and agile working; enabling staff to work closer to home without the need to travel; continued homeworking or, more flexible working hours. These options enable levelling up of opportunity for staff with protected characteristics in terms of disability and age, with greater flexibility and work/life balance helping staff to stay in work longer. This also increases opportunity and flexibility for staff with childcare or other caring responsibilities. A focus on reducing rural impact also helps to enable people in the Highlands to stay in their communities and gain employment, without the need to travel long distances or requiring access to personal transport.

The project should also impact on reducing poverty by providing a wider variety of employment opportunities that will allow people to work when and where they can and continue to develop within an agile organisation. Further work will be undertaken once the survey is analysed.

### **Case Study: Financial Inclusion following birth of a child**

Family finances can be affected following the birth of a child and can lead to financial pressure. Often, families do not claim the full range of benefits they are entitled to.

In 2019, Council's Health Visiting Service and Welfare Team were invited to join other organisations from across Scotland to be involved in a national financial inclusion improvement project to address the high level of unclaimed benefits by families with young children.

The teams were asked to improve or introduce referral pathways to money advice services in their area. The aim of the project is to maximize the household income of families in Highland to ensure their children have what they need to support a healthy start in life.

To achieve this, the team plans to ensure that pregnant women and parents of young children in are routinely asked by their health visitor about money worries and are offered a referral to an advice service that is accessible and sensitive to their needs.

Examples of successes included a family of four's household income increasing by over £350 per month and a single parent received an extra £200 to help with her debt.

There was a further partnership element to this work as NHS Highland's Health Improvement Team offered extra training to the health visitors developed a training package in partnership with Highland Council's Welfare Team.

### **Building Equality into our Work - key actions going forward**

- Current provision of Equality and human rights training will be reviewed, and a new virtual module will be developed which will form part of the mandatory element of the Employee Induction.
- Revised Impact assessment templates will be produced along with guidance and training incorporating equality, human rights, socio-economic/poverty and Island Impacts.
- A review of HR policies including assessment of impacts on staff with protected characteristics will be undertaken.

- Further incorporate human rights-based approaches into the work of the Council, this will likely include opportunities resulting from the Feeley report into the future delivery of Adult Social Care terms of a human rights focus.

### **1.3 Engaging and involving communities**

The Council, Education Authority, and Licensing Board ordinarily use a wide range of methods to engage with communities in Highland. This includes surveys, a Citizen's Panel, formal and informal consultation with groups, consultations with elected members, a Licensing Forum, Community Councils, Local Community Partnerships, pupil and parent engagement in schools, tenant engagement, and our day-to-day contact with customers. Social media and other forms of digital data gathering are being increasingly used and explored, providing practical alternatives given the geography of Highland.

Covid-19 has meant we have had to change many of the ways we engage with communities, Our work to engage with equality groups as we emerge from Covid is under development, through the Council's framework for community participation and involvement and will inform the Council's approach to recovery.

The Council maintains a database of contacts for a wide range of local groups with an interest in equality and diversity, providing a valuable network of contacts to ask for views on equality related issues. There is continual engagement with the groups on the equality contacts database, with email alerts regularly sent by the Council containing updates on local events, consultations and funding opportunities.

Some examples of recent engagement follow:

#### ***Gypsy Travellers***

Each year, with the site residents, we now review the quality of the four residential sites we provide to Gypsy Travellers. This is to ensure that they are well maintained and managed and meet national site standards. This resulted in several (resident-identified) improvements to enhance standards in 2019 and a range of on-going activities. A working group now meets regularly to take these forward.

#### ***Infrastructure and Environment – Building Standards and Access Panels***

The Council's Building Standards Service has regular engagement with the local Access Panels across Highland. The service notifies the Local Access Panels/Groups of the weekly list of building warrant applications received via a link to the Building Standards Register. This allows the Access Panel to contact via [virtual.sbsteam@highland.gov.uk](mailto:virtual.sbsteam@highland.gov.uk) requesting to be consulted on a particular building warrant application.

The Principal Building Standards Surveyor in each of the 7 localities is available to attend Access Panel meetings and to provide advice and guidance on the Technical Standards to the building regulations.



### ***Inclusion Scotland Covid-19 Highland Summit***

In January 2021, over a hundred disabled people in Highland attended a digital conference organised by Inclusion Scotland co-produced by with The Highland Council, NHS Highland and The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) to share their experience of how the pandemic has affected their lives.

The event was supported AbilityNet who provided valuable specialist technical support to make this online summit as accessible as possible to disabled people.'

In advance of the summit, disabled people had been asked to complete a survey about their experiences during Covid-19 and a number of priority areas have been identified for the Council and partners to engage further with disabled people and consider where improvement actions can be taken as we emerge from the pandemic. Over 180 people responded to the survey, analysis of the survey is being carried out by UHI but initial results showed that More than 1 in 3 participants felt that their experiences of the following areas have become worse due to Covid-19 Leisure and Recreation, Health and Wellbeing; Public Transport; Built Environment; Social Care.

<https://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/News/Pages/COVIDHighlandDisabilityForum.aspx>

### ***Pride 2019***

After providing support to the first major Pride event in the Highlands in 2018, the Council's Events Manager engaged with the local organisers, Proud Ness, for a second event in July 2019, themed 'We are Family'. Making use of the infrastructure of the Highland games held the day before, and promoting the day as an inclusive, family-friendly event, an estimated 10,00 people participated, almost double the attendance the previous year. The result of the partnership was commented on in the Pink Saltire as follows '*excellent planning by the core organisers was a real credit to the city and to Scotland, securing Inverness as one of the country's top Pride events*'.



<https://pinksaltire.com/2019/07/22/thousands-march-as-pride-takes-over-glasgow-and-inverness/>

### ***Engaging and involving communities – Key actions going forward:***

- Use the Engagement Framework to encourage inclusive approaches to engagement with equality groups
- Use learning through the Engagement Framework to understand needs of particular groups for recovery work

## 1.4 Awareness and promotion

A range of methods are used to raise awareness of, and to promote, equality with employees, Members and communities, from specific initiatives and events to the use of social media.

As with other activities, promotion and events have been significantly affected by Covid-19 with an even greater reliance on social media and online information than previously both internally and externally. These are some examples of how the Council has promoted equality during the 2019 – 2021 period.

### Case studies

#### 18 December 2020

Promoting Inclusion Scotland's and its partners survey and online summit want to learn about the changing priorities of disabled people as we enter the recovery and renewal planning phase in Highland.

<https://www.facebook.com/highlandcouncil/posts/3960127580665535>

#### Share your priorities for inclusive Covid recovery plans in Highland



powered by Covid-19 Highland Disability Forum   

Highland Violence Against Women Partnership promoted advice to ensure people affected by domestic abuse knew where to get help during Covid-19

December 2020 - <http://ow.ly/YQco50CPsn4>

November 2020 - <http://ow.ly/lpqx50CizkX>

April 2020 - <http://ow.ly/GAoT50zmflI>





IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING  
DOMESTIC ABUSE  
HELP IS AVAILABLE



Supporting LGBT History Month  
February  
2021 <http://ow.ly/Bhu530rv7kd>  
[Supporting LGBT History Month February  
2020](#)  
Supporting Proud Ness July 2019  
<http://ow.ly/Yg3f30m4b0O>



|  |  |
|--|--|
|   | <p><a href="#">Holocaust Memorial Day, 2020, Inverness remembers</a> In January 2020, the Inverness Interfaith Group commemorated HMD with an event in the Inverness Town House, and introduced by the Depute Provost, Cllr Graham Ross on the theme of 'Stand Together'. Pupils from Cradlehall Primary School participated in the traditional candle lighting ceremony to remember all who died.</p> <p>A similar event was not possible 2021 but the Ness Bridge was lit in purple to commemorate the day and the theme of 'Be the light in the darkness'.</p> <p><a href="https://www.facebook.com/highlandcouncil/photos/a.854457884565869/4051908468154112/">https://www.facebook.com/highlandcouncil/photos/a.854457884565869/4051908468154112/</a></p> |
|  |  |

Internally, promotion of equality has included articles on World Mental Health Day, International Women's Day, Time To Talk, guidance on living with long-term conditions, and LGBT awareness. Some further examples of external promotion can be found at the following links:

- 10 May 2019 [Deaf Awareness Week 2019](#)
- 30 May 2019 [Inverness schools receive rights respecting schools award](#)
- 27 June 2019 [Drummond School celebrates award for good autism practice](#)
- 3 Sept 2019 [Highland prepares for fourth group of Syrian refugees](#)
- 6 Dec 2019 [Health & Social Care Partnership maintains Baby Friendly status](#)
- 18 Dec 2019 [Living Wage Accreditation for Highland Council](#)
- 12 Feb 2020 [Syrian refugee resettlement programme in Highland](#)
- 18 Nov 2020 [Extensive engagement with stakeholders agreed for Additional Support Needs \(ASN\) transformation in Highland](#)

18 Nov 2020 [Funding to invest in and develop additional mental health and wellbeing services for children and young people is on its way to Highland](#)

1 Dec 2020 [Inverness Royal Academy to receive Rights Respecting School award](#)

2 Dec 2020 [Chair of the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee welcomes Bill on the free provision of period products](#)

11 Dec 2020 [Taking Forward the Caithness Mental Wellbeing Pathfinder Project](#)

4 Feb 2021 [Committee focusses on enhancing employability services and support](#)

10 Feb 2021 [Highland families start to see benefits of financial inclusion initiative](#)

10 Feb 2021 [Highland families set to benefit from Connecting Scotland scheme with imminent arrival of new technology](#)

10 Feb 2021 [Highland Council underlines its commitment to The Promise to ensure better futures for care experienced young people and adults](#)

11 Feb 2021 [Mental health and wellbeing support in Highland schools](#)

### **Awareness and Promotion – Key actions going forward:**

- Continue to promote initiative and activities
- Increase use of social media and other online options

## **1.5 Partnership Working**

There is a history of local partners working together on equality, from joint training, shared equality outcomes, and partnership approaches to interpretation and communication support and tackling gender-based violence. Examples are highlighted throughout the report.

The Highland Outcome Improvement Plan<sup>6</sup> aims to tackle the issues that lead to inequalities. To address barriers arising from protected characteristics, equality of opportunity is a cross-cutting theme of the Plan.

Since 2012, the Council and NHS Highland have worked towards the integration of health and social care. The Highland Health and Social Care Partnership (Highland HSCP) adopted the lead agency model, under which Highland Council assume lead responsibility for children's care and services and NHS Highland assume lead responsibility for adult health and social care.

### **Partnership Working - Key actions going forward:**

- Re-tendering for interpretations services with NHS Highland
- Re-establish partnership equality group

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<sup>6</sup> [Highland Outcome Improvement Plan 2017](#)

## **1.6 Education and Learning**

Education Services in Highland are delivered by the Education and Learning Service. Ensuring the promotion of equality, diversity and children's rights is central to the Council's work with children, young people and families.

The Highland Council has 203 schools, including 29 secondary schools, across its geography and over 30, 000 pupils. As across Scotland, Education services have been significantly affected by the measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19, with schools closed for much of the period since March 2020 and approaches to remote learning being adapted and developed.

Covid has also affected the ability to publish verified Education and Learning data for 2020 and 2021 that would ordinarily be used to measure progress on equality and help to identify progress, including Care Experienced and Looked After Children status; Disability; Exclusion; Additional Support Needs (ASN); Children from Armed Forces families; and Positive Destinations.

The priority throughout Covid has been to protect the health and wellbeing of our children, young people and staff throughout the pandemic, however there are concerns that the full impact of these measures may not become fully visible for some time especially on the most vulnerable and socio-economically disadvantaged children and families<sup>7</sup>.

In Highland, measures have been put in place to support learners who may be particularly vulnerable or disadvantaged due to Covid, and action plans developed to support the emergence of schools from this period<sup>8</sup>.

Short-term (urgent) priorities had been identified while schools are open only for vulnerable children and the children of certain key workers and included supporting complex needs during remote learning period, including safeguarding and supporting health and wellbeing.

Going forward, medium – long term actions include a number to address Inclusion and Health and Wellbeing:

- Continue to develop the GIRFEC approach and stakeholder review of the Highland Practice Model implementation and include "The Promise" and community of school post covid
- Development of whole system mental health strategy with a 5year sustainable plan linked to the CPP approach
- Develop and implement new resources specifically supporting mental health education in schools, this has been piloted in Caithness with a focus on Promoting Positive Behaviour, Emotional Literacy and Understanding the Teenage Brain.
- Further activities which were undertaken across Caithness included training led by The Highland Council Psychological Services and were free for anyone in

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<sup>7</sup> [Equality Audit](#), Education Scotland

<sup>8</sup> [Education and Learning, Short, Medium and Long Term Actions](#), Highland Council

Caithness. On completion of the three courses: Mental Health Awareness, Suicide Awareness and Trauma Informed participants have received a certificate

- Developing approaches to ensure all schools hold and enact professional values of inclusion and inclusive practice
- Developing teachers' understanding of additional support needs post covid and their role in supporting the identification of ASN and providing appropriate learning experience for all learners, this is being addressed with a 9 step approach to supporting ASN in all of our schools
- Review of roles and remits of ASNTs and PSA to reflect our Children and Young People post covid, including the recovery of learning and teaching as well as providing a supportive leadership framework for Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL).

A new Integrated children's service plan 2021- 2023 for Highland is being finalised which commits the partnership to upholding the rights of infants, children and young people in ensuring they are protected from unfair treatment (Equality Act 2010) and that every child has the opportunity to grow up to maximise their full potential.

In November 2020, it was [agreed](#) that extensive Member and stakeholder engagement, would be carried out following on from work undertaken in Additional Support Needs (ASN) transformation since February 2020 would be undertaken.

A whole systems approach to mental health and wellbeing for schools is in development<sup>9</sup> and will be a key part of building upon the integrated approach that has grown during the joint response of communities and partners during the pandemic. Within this approach work has already been implemented in schools, focused on staff training and pupil wellbeing as an immediate first step.

Equality and children's rights are also mainstreamed throughout Learning and Education in a number of ways. The new Service Plan includes a commitment to training on equality and diversity and is delivered to all newly qualified teachers, and to other groups of staff on request. Promoting Positive Relationships training for all school staff undertaken in session 2019-2020 to support the updated policy.

All policies and guidance documents created by the Psychological Services include an Equalities Impact Assessment and a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment, and budget decisions are all considered for equality impact

Equality Groups have been established in some schools, Highland Children's and Young People's Forum are represented on the Education and Learning Committee, and Education and Learning are represented on the partnership Corporate Parenting Board, Child Protection Committee, and Syrian Resettlement Strategic Group. Highland's Youth Parliament are consulted with regularly on aspects of education support, mental health, and disability.

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<sup>9</sup>[https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/77740/item\\_4\\_education\\_and\\_learning\\_-\\_back\\_to\\_school](https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/77740/item_4_education_and_learning_-_back_to_school)



## **Case studies**

### **Digital Inclusion**

Throughout Covid, the Highland Council's extensive digital learning provision, its Chromebook estate and dedication of school staff & central officers have ensured continuity of education for Children and Young People in our schools. Additional Connecting Scotland resources have improved access to digital technologies for all learners, supported digital inclusion and ensured that during the pandemic The Highland Council has been able to sustain and excel in the delivery of digital learning across the Highlands. As far as is practicable, the impacts of location, rurality, poverty and other socio-economic factors, have been mitigated and education and learning sustained during periods of lockdown.

Leaders in education have begun a journey that is driving innovation. Investment into digital technology (over the course of the last five years and with additional grant monies) has resulted in a more equitable access to digital tools for all and an improvement in professional learning opportunities. In many schools this is being demonstrated in an upskilling of practitioners and improved pedagogy in the classroom.

The Highland Virtual Academy, with a number of additional staff appointed during the COVID period is supporting the engagement and re-engagement across Highland of learners who may be particularly vulnerable or disadvantaged due to COVID. Schools use an online referral system to support individuals to make progress with education and learning.

As part of the Connecting Scotland grant, the decision to purchase a Council-wide license for Text Help's Read and Write was made which now provides access to all pupils and staff, as well as for use at home. This literacy toolkit can be used to provide literacy support to pupils of all ages, including those with additional support needs.

Education Scotland has engaged with officers and school leaders on the delivery of remote learning and have identified strong practice and support in Highland for remote learning and digital inclusion. A number of schools have been selected as part of a professional learning conversation to discuss what is working well in our schools, what the challenges and barriers are and what support nationally would be of benefit to schools and authorities. In particular, the success of our schools is evidenced in a number of case studies that have been used to showcase good practice, nationally.

### **INCLUDE**

Working with the Equalities Group in Nairn Academy, pupils have been supported to create a self-evaluation document for schools called INCLUDE. This document provides indicators for schools to measure their success in relation to inclusive practice for pupils with the full range of protected characteristics. The guidance will replace the current Equality and Diversity Policy for schools and will be available for use across the Northern Alliance local authorities.

### **Rights Respecting Schools**

Several schools have now achieved bronze, silver and gold status in relation to the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award. Cradlehall Primary, Lochardil Primary and Crown Primary Schools are all 'Gold' Rights Respecting Schools. Additionally, there are 10 schools accredited as 'Silver', 30 schools who have achieved 'Bronze' status, and a further 24 registered on the programme. UNICEF is the world's leading organisation working for children and their rights. The Rights Respecting Schools Award is granted to schools that show commitment to promoting and realising children's rights and encouraging adults, children and young people to respect the rights of others in school. Silver is given to schools that make excellent progress towards embedding the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into its ethos and curriculum. Gold is the third stage of the Rights Respecting Schools Award and is granted by UNICEF UK to schools that have fully embedded children's rights throughout the school in its policies, practice and ethos.

### **Deaf Education Services**

Deaf Education Services based at Dingwall Academy continued to roll out the delivery of the 3-day programme created and delivered by their team introducing of BSL as a language option sitting alongside the traditional languages of French, German and Gaelic. Out with Highland a bespoke training package was created to be delivered in person pre Covid. Since Covid, two online training sessions have been developed, one which looks at how to navigate the pack and one which looks at using the pack in the classroom setting. To date, 17 authorities in Scotland have now bought the pack and three more are looking at it. In February 2020, Councillors were entertained by students from the [Dingwall Academy BSL Choir](#).

### **Education and Learning – Key actions going forward:**

- Inclusion and Wellbeing actions to be undertaken
- Equality and Diversity training of Education and Learning staff to continue
- The Northern Alliance (including representatives from Highland Schools) and the North Sea Commission are taking forward work on further participation as agreed at a joint conference in November 2020.
- Equality and Diversity Policy templates will be updated in 2021 to include the INCLUDE Guidance developed by Nairn Academy pupils
- Pupils from Kinlochleven 3-18, Culloden Academy and Cawdor Primary are creating a self-evaluation tool for schools on supporting Wellbeing for all, to be used across Highland and possibly across the Northern Alliance.



## **1.7 Highland Licensing Board**

The Highland Licensing Board ("the Board") has responsibility for liquor licensing functions under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 and gambling functions under the Gambling Act 2005.

The Board is required to publish a statement of their policy before the end of the period of 18 months after an ordinary election of councillors for local government areas in respect of the exercise of their functions under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 during the next licensing policy period. The current policy statement will apply from 4 November 2018 to 3 November 2023. In preparing their licensing policy statement, The Board must seek to promote the licensing objectives of: preventing crime and disorder; securing public safety; preventing public nuisance; protecting and improving public health; and protecting children and young people from harm.

Every three years, the Board is required to publish a policy statement of licensing principles they propose to apply in exercising their functions under the Gambling Act 2005. The current policy will apply from 2019-2022.

The Board is supported by a Clerk and a small team of support staff and two Licensing Standards Officers. All staff carrying out the Board's responsibilities are recruited and employed by the Council. The Board works and engages with the Highland Licensing Forum. The Forum gives advice and makes recommendations to the Board but does not review, give advice nor make recommendations in relation to the Board's exercise of its functions in respect of an individual case.

### **The Licensing Board and Equality**

The Board aims, at all times, to act in accordance with the public sector duties under equality legislation. In 2013, the Board set out its commitment to equality in its Equality Strategy where it recognised that equality is a continuing journey. Since 2015, the Board has aligned its equality duties with those of the Highland Council and the Highland Education Authority. This approach acknowledges the work of each body to contribute to common aims to advance equality.

The Board also expects licence holders to address equalities issues in all aspects of the operation of their premises. In this regard, it should be noted that since 1 April 2018 applicants for new premises licences have been required by law to include with their licence application a disabled access and facilities statement in a prescribed form. An application cannot be considered by the Board unless accompanied by a completed statement.

### **Licensing Board – Key actions going forward:**

- Involvement with Violence Against Women partnership training programme (Equality Outcome 3)

## Section 2 Employment

### *2.1 Equalities in Employment Monitoring Report 2021*

#### ***Introduction***

The Highland Council is committed through policy and action to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. The Council is particularly aware of the duties under the Equality Act 2010 in terms of employment monitoring and is committed to meeting these.

The data contained in the report is relevant for the period April 2020 – December 2020.

This report includes the findings of analysis relating to the protected characteristics of age, disability, race and sex. The Council currently holds data on:

- 100% of the workforce in relation to age and sex; and
- 31.2% of the workforce in relation to disability and 26.5% in relation to ethnic group.

Currently limited information is held on the workforce by other protected characteristics and is below levels for publishing data confidently. The Council is now changing the way all equalities data is collected, including other protected characteristics and will report on these when the data allows for meaningful analysis and further actions may be identified as a result. This project is nearing completion and employees will be encouraged to complete their own equalities data directly into the HR/Payroll System. The data being requested will match the Census 2022 categories.

The outcomes and action plans supported by this report are published in the Equalities Mainstreaming Report.

#### ***Age***

Analysis of data relating to age distribution shows a high proportion of staff aged between 41 and 60 years of age and a low proportion of staff aged 30 and under. Comparison of the two major groups, teaching staff and Scottish Joint Council (SJC) staff continues to show an even more marked skew in the SJC workforce with 3.8 times as many employees aged 51 to 60 as aged 21 to 30. SJC represents councils in Scotland and their employees (other than those for whom other national negotiating machinery exists, such as teaching staff).

SJC staff under 30 are found predominantly in the Technical & Practical, Personal Care and Business Support job families and in the lower grades 1 to 5. The majority of staff who continue to work beyond 71 years of age do so in Technical & Practical jobs and in lower graded work.

(See figures 1 to 5)

## ***Disability***

0.82% of the Council workforce identify as being disabled. As a percentage of those staff on for whom the Council hold data this equates to 2.6% of the workforce. Given the makeup of the Highland Community people with disabilities appear to be under-represented in the workforce.

In relation to occupational segregation, compared with employees who do not identify as being disabled, employees who do identify as being disabled work in similar roles. Disabled and non-disabled employees are found in similar ratios across business support, technical & practical and personal care roles. Disabled employees are slightly over-represented in professional and community roles and underrepresented in management roles.

Disabled employees are underrepresented in the most senior grades with none in grades HC12-15. That said given the small number of employees on these grades one or two appointments could make a significant difference.

There are still significantly more opportunities for part time and working in the lower SJC grades (HC01 – 06).

(See figures 6 to 10)

## ***Race***

Based on the percentage of the workforce on whom the Council hold data, the make-up of ethnic groups employed by the Council largely reflects the wider Highland population as described in the 2011 census. During the reporting period the population of Black & Ethnic Minority staff was unchanged with no new starts or leavers. Given the small number of people from minority ethnic communities living in Highland, and reflected in the Council workforce, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions from the analysis. Despite the small numbers it is hoped that over time monitoring will provide evidence of any trends that need to be analysed and addressed.

Employees from minority ethnic groups are under-represented in the most senior grades with none in grades HC13-15. That said given the small number of employees on these grades a small number of appointments could make a significant difference.

(See figures 11 to 15)

## ***Sex***

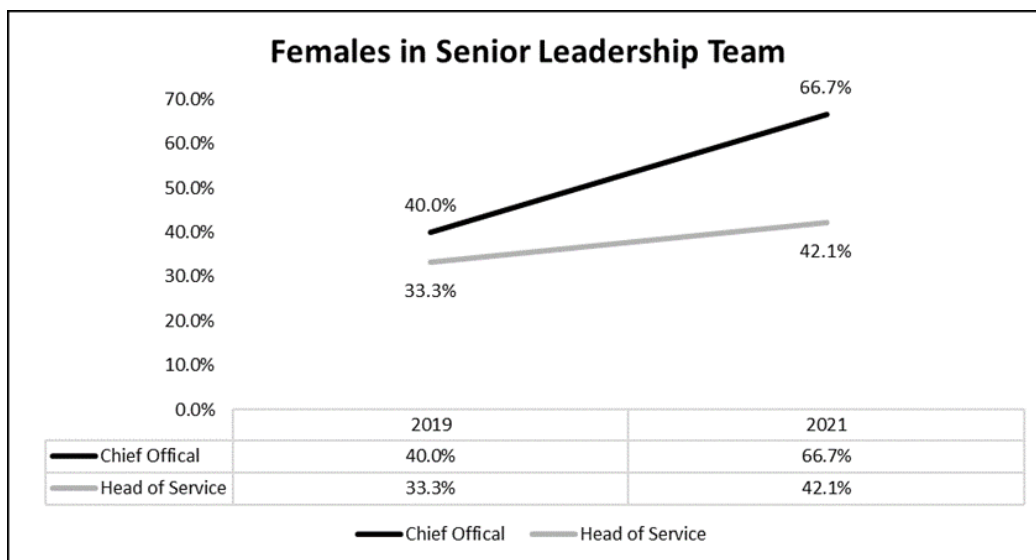
Analysis of the data relating to the protected characteristic of sex shows a predominantly female workforce (74.3%). This is the case for both the SJC and teaching workforce.

In relation to occupational segregation, the pattern of male and female employment is varied. Male and female employees are found in similar ratios across Community, technical & practical and management roles. Female employees are significantly

over-represented in personal care, business support and professional & specialist roles. Care must be taken in the drawing conclusions from the technical & practical group as horizontal segregation continues to persist with males working predominantly in community works roles and females working predominantly in catering, caring and cleaning roles.

In 2021, 53.1% of the managers employed in SJC management posts are women. However, there is significant difference in the distribution of male versus female managers with female managers being more concentrated in the lower graded management grades.

In 2019, 37.8% of the senior leadership team were female. There have been significant improvements in this and 50% of the senior leadership team are now female; although still under-represented given 74% of the workforce is female.



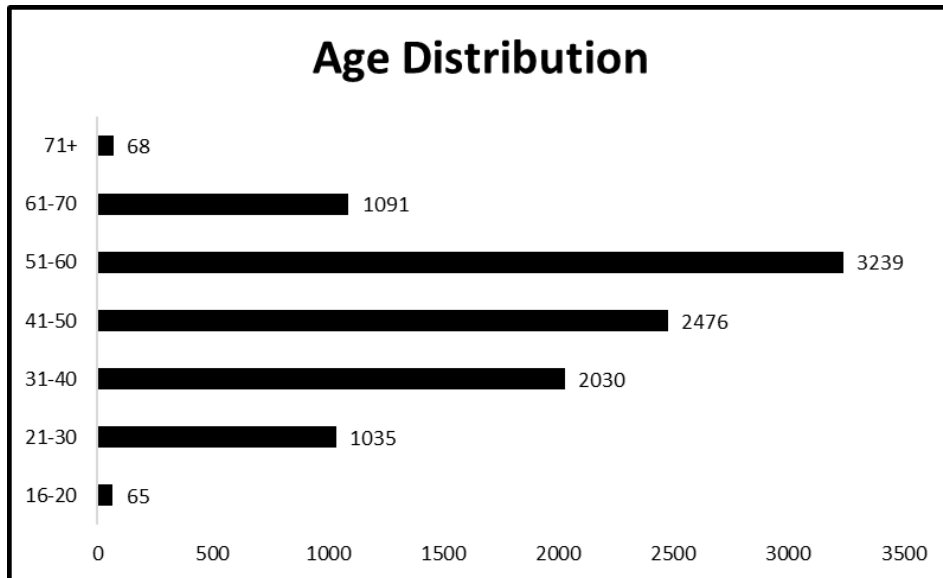
There are still significantly more opportunities for part time and term time working in the lower SJC grades (HC01 – 06).

Information and analysis of [gender pay gaps](#) is published separately as is the [gender pay gaps](#).

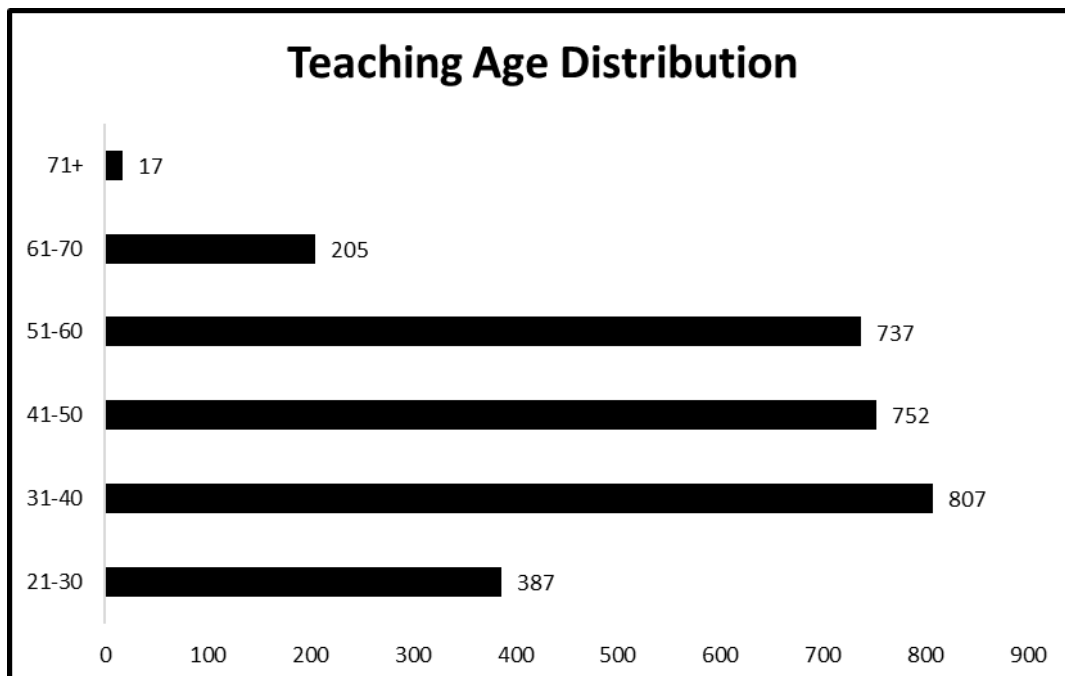
(See figures 16 to 22)

## Age (Figures 1 to 5)

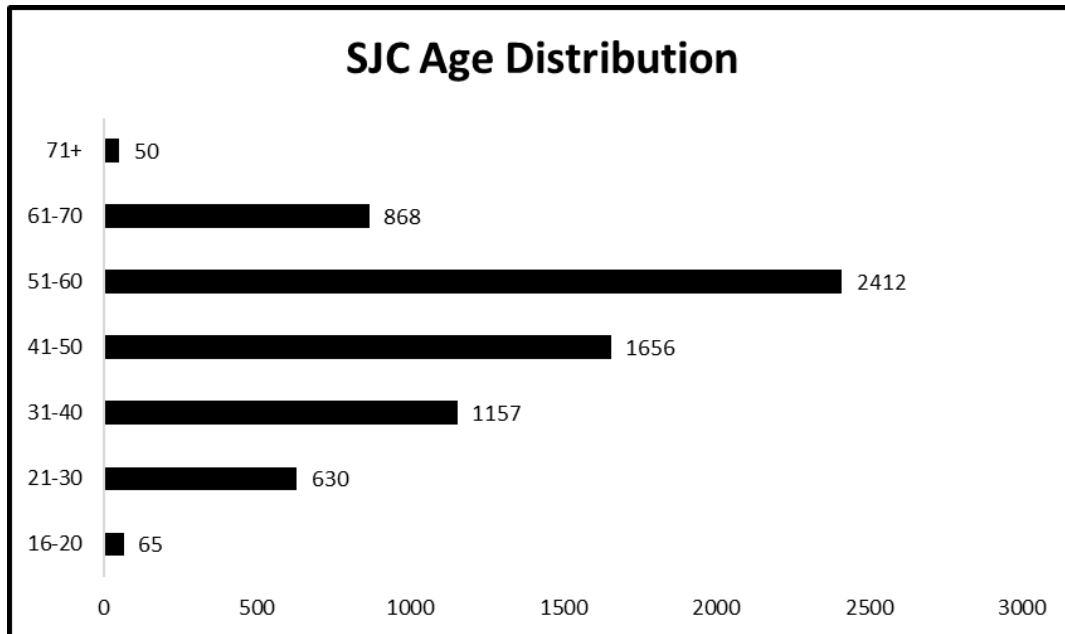
The distribution of all employees by age (Figure 1)



The distribution of teaching employees by age (Figure 2)



The distribution of Scottish Joint Council (SJC) employees by age (Figure 3)



The distribution of Scottish Joint Council (SJC) employees by age and Job Family (Figure 4)

| Age Range | Business Support | Community | Management | Personal Care | Professional & Specialist | Technical & Practical | Total | %      |
|-----------|------------------|-----------|------------|---------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------|--------|
| 16-20     | 10               | 1         |            | 23            |                           | 31                    | 65    | 0.95%  |
| 21-30     | 102              | 10        | 2          | 288           | 44                        | 184                   | 630   | 9.21%  |
| 31-40     | 164              | 35        | 17         | 449           | 146                       | 346                   | 1157  | 16.92% |
| 41-50     | 221              | 56        | 38         | 613           | 206                       | 522                   | 1656  | 24.22% |
| 51-60     | 317              | 93        | 99         | 704           | 260                       | 939                   | 2412  | 35.27% |
| 61-70     | 102              | 33        | 17         | 204           | 73                        | 439                   | 868   | 12.69% |
| 71+       | 7                | 1         |            | 8             | 2                         | 32                    | 50    | 0.73%  |
| Total     | 923              | 229       | 173        | 2289          | 731                       | 2493                  | 6838  | N/A    |

**The distribution of Scottish Joint Council (SJC) employees by age and grade (Figure 5)**

| Grade | 16-20 | 21-30 | 31-40 | 41-50 | 51-60 | 61-70 | 71+ | Total |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| HC01  | 2     | 23    | 51    | 60    | 111   | 59    | 5   | 311   |
| HC02  | 16    | 46    | 97    | 158   | 234   | 148   | 18  | 717   |
| HC03  | 11    | 89    | 156   | 217   | 290   | 102   | 13  | 878   |
| HC04  | 18    | 144   | 281   | 490   | 707   | 241   | 7   | 1888  |
| HC05  | 15    | 217   | 251   | 306   | 394   | 135   | 1   | 1319  |
| HC06  | 0     | 50    | 106   | 103   | 167   | 53    | 2   | 481   |
| HC07  | 3     | 28    | 72    | 91    | 165   | 49    | 1   | 409   |
| HC08  | 0     | 8     | 24    | 47    | 54    | 15    | 3   | 151   |
| HC09  | 0     | 24    | 71    | 101   | 120   | 29    | 0   | 345   |
| HC10  | 0     | 1     | 33    | 55    | 72    | 17    | 0   | 178   |
| HC11  | 0     | 0     | 9     | 15    | 46    | 7     | 0   | 77    |
| HC12  | 0     | 0     | 4     | 8     | 23    | 7     | 0   | 42    |
| HC13  | 0     | 0     | 1     | 2     | 12    | 5     | 0   | 20    |
| HC14  | 0     | 0     | 0     | 1     | 5     | 0     | 0   | 6     |
| HC15  | 0     | 0     | 1     | 2     | 12    | 1     | 0   | 16    |
| Total | 65    | 630   | 1157  | 1656  | 2412  | 868   | 50  | 6838  |

**Disability (Figures 6 to 10)**

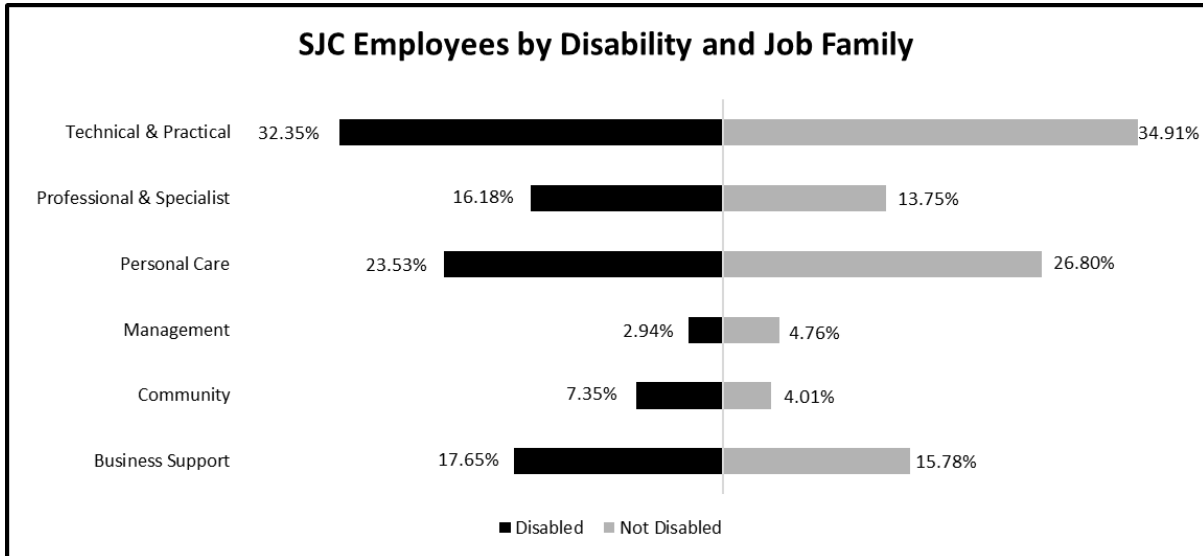
**The distribution of all employees by disability (Figure 6)**

| Total Workforce | Workers identifying as disabled |       | Workers identifying as non-disabled |        | Disability status of workers unknown |        |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|--------|
| 10,004          | 82                              | 0.82% | 3040                                | 30.39% | 6882                                 | 68.79% |

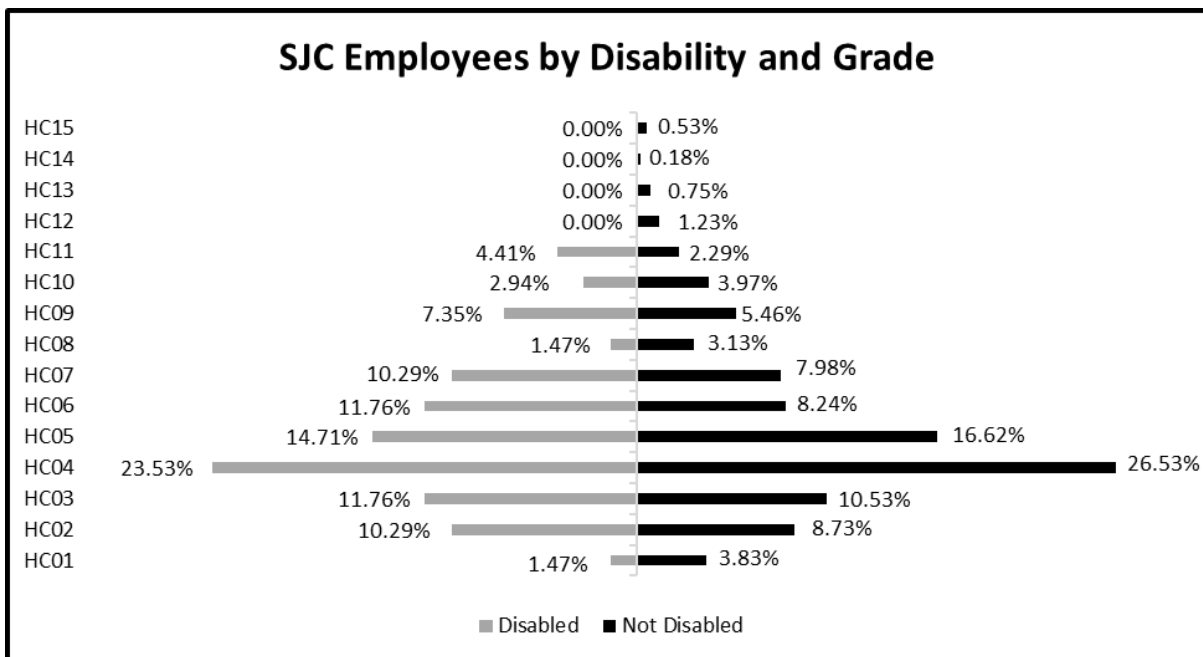
**The distribution of employees joining and leaving the Council by disability (Figure 7)**

|              | Starters | Leaver |
|--------------|----------|--------|
| Disabled     | 0        | 2      |
| Not Disabled | 0        | 112    |
| Unknown      | 327      | 744    |

Occupational Segregation by Disability (Figure 8)

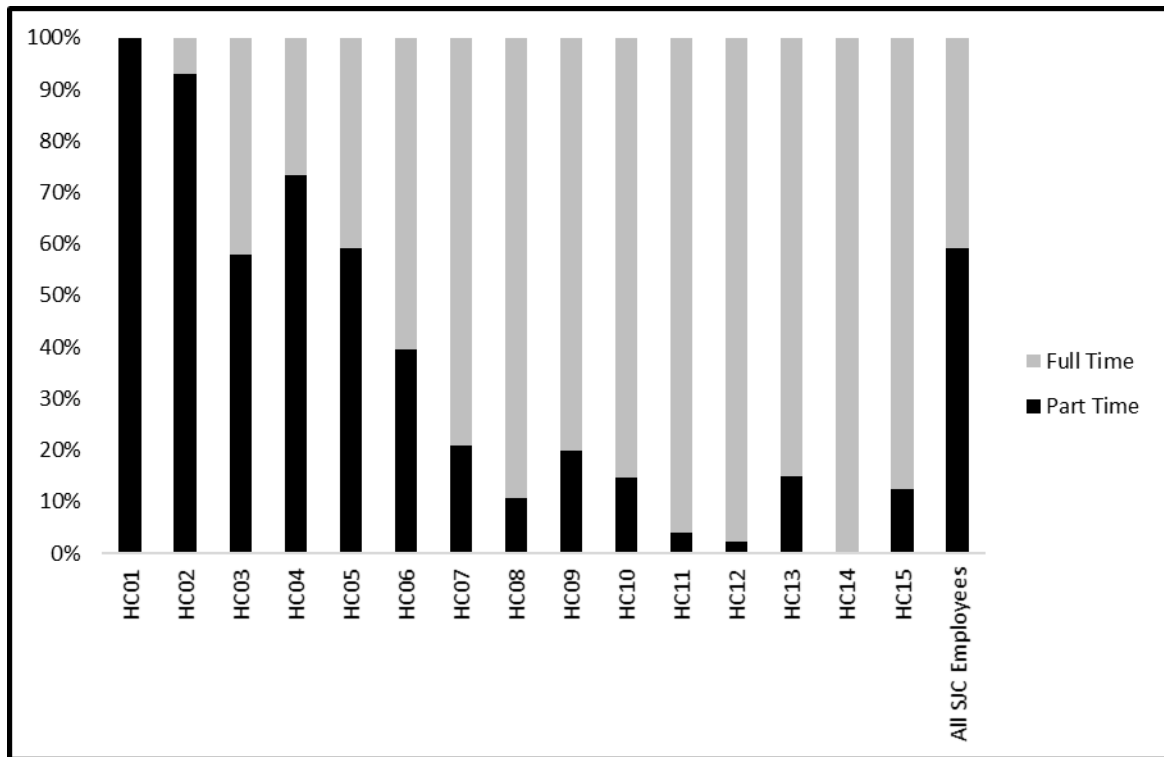


Occupational Segregation by Disability (Figure 9)





**Availability of Part Time Employment – Disability (Figure 10)**



**Race (Figures 11 to 15)**

The distribution of all employees by ethnic group in comparison with the Highland Population (Figure 11)

| Ethnicity                               | No. of Employees | Highland Council % | 2011 Census % |
|---|------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Other Minority Ethnic Groups            | 9                | 0.3%               | 0.7           |
| Asian, Asian Scottish, or Asian British | 6                | 0.2%               | 0.8           |
| Not Disclosed                           | 24               | 0.9%               | 0.0           |
| White - Other White Ethnic Group        | 78               | 2.9%               | 4.0           |
| White - Other British                   | 301              | 11.3%              | 14.7          |
| White - Scottish                        | 2235             | 84.2%              | 79.9          |
| All Employees                           | 2653             |                    |               |

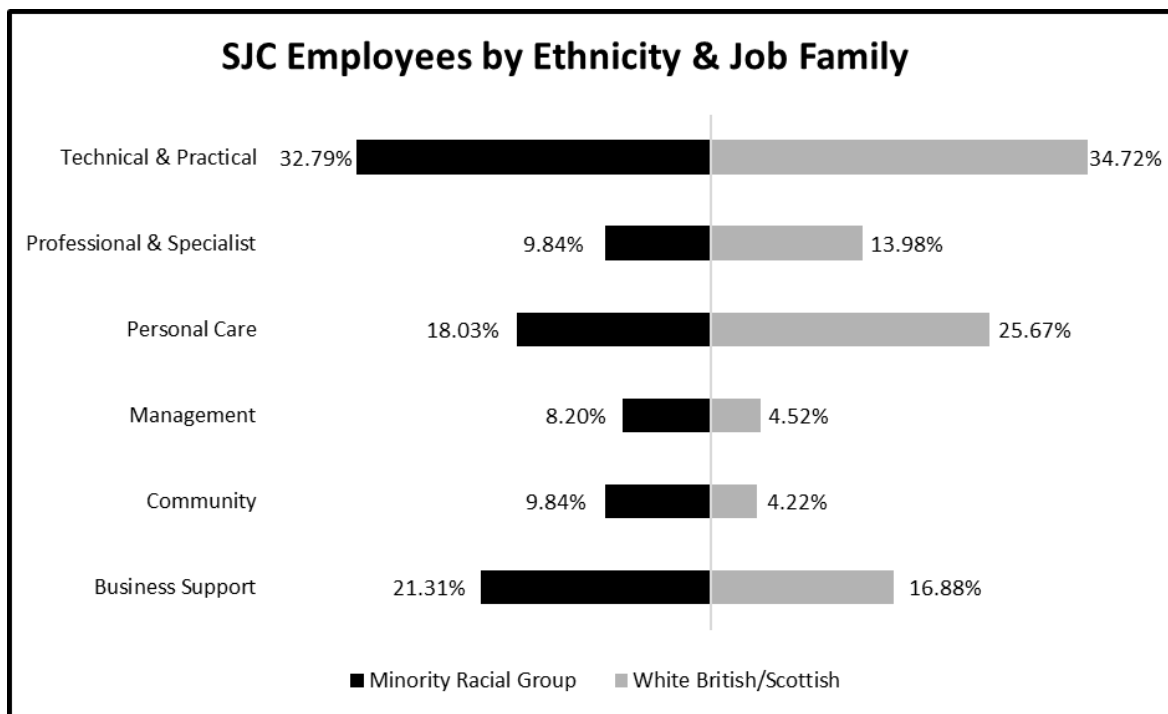
**The provision of training by ethnic group (April-December 2020) (Figure 12)**

All non-mandatory/statutory training has been paused due to the global pandemic and therefore comparative figures are not available for the period April 2020-December 2020.

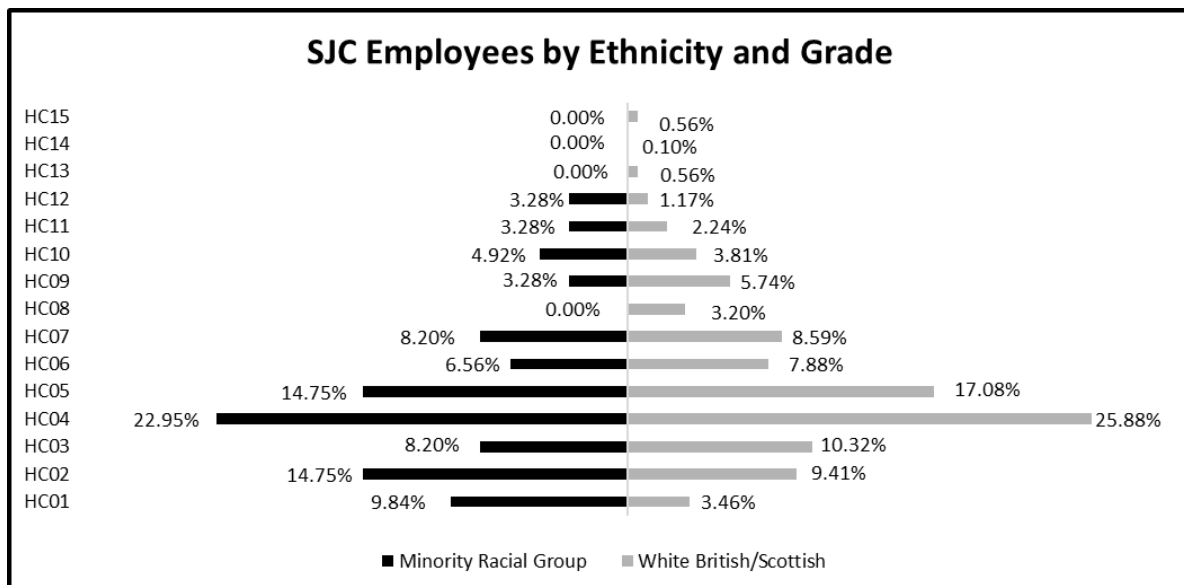
The distribution of employees joining and leaving the Council by ethnic group (Figure 13)

|                                  | Starters | Leaver |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------|
| Black and Minority Ethnic Groups | 0        | 3      |
| Unknown                          | 327      | 718    |
| White Groups                     | 0        | 137    |
| Total                            | 327      | 858    |

Occupational Segregation – Ethnicity (Figure 14)



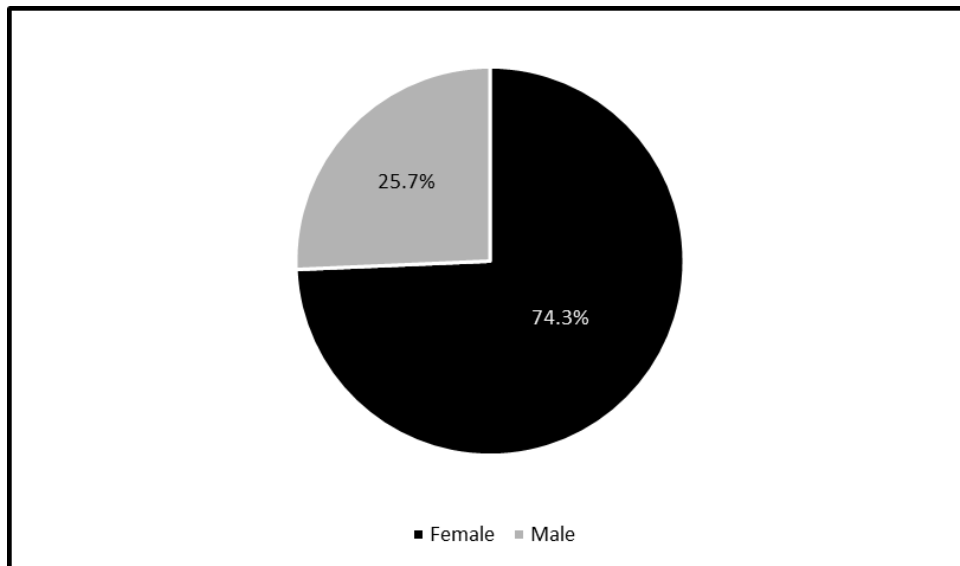
Occupational Segregation – Ethnicity (Figure 15)



## Sex (Figures 16 to 22)

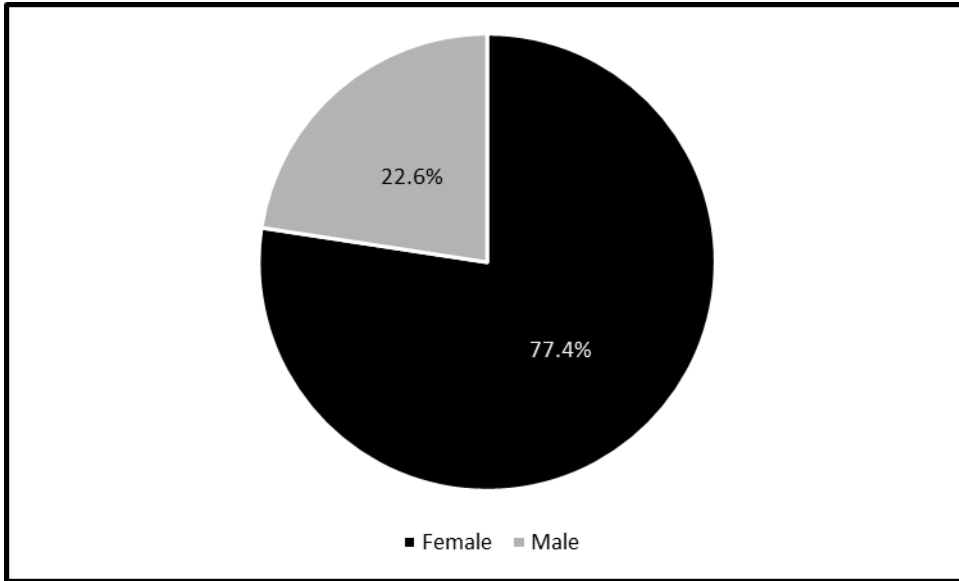
The distribution of all employees by sex/gender (Figure 16)

| Gender           | Female | Male | Total |
|------------------|--------|------|-------|
| No. of Employees | 7434   | 2570 | 10004 |



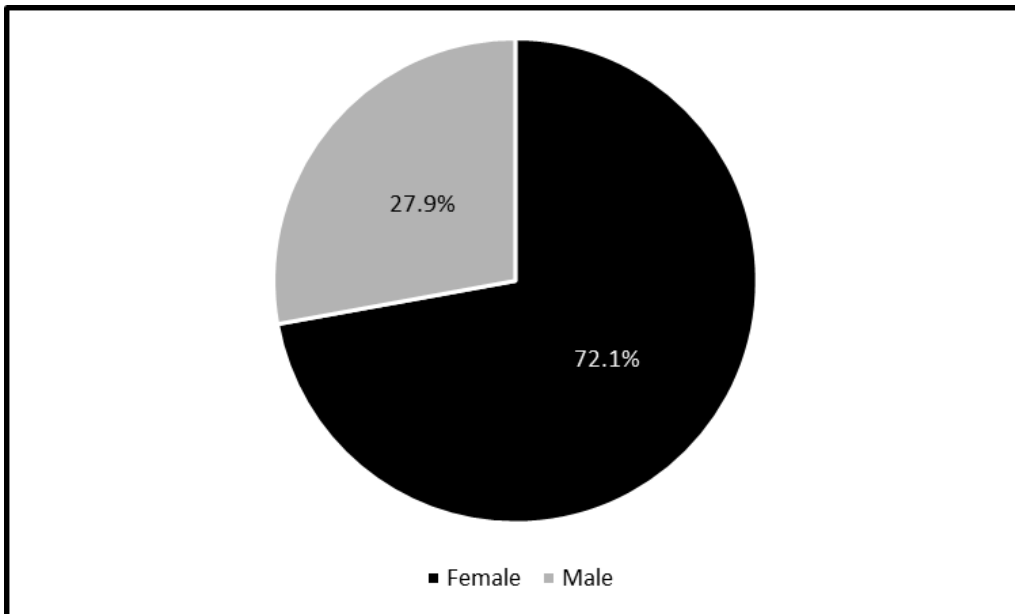
The distribution of teachers by sex/gender (Figure 17)

| Gender           | Female | Male | Total |
|------------------|--------|------|-------|
| No. of Employees | 2249   | 656  | 2905  |

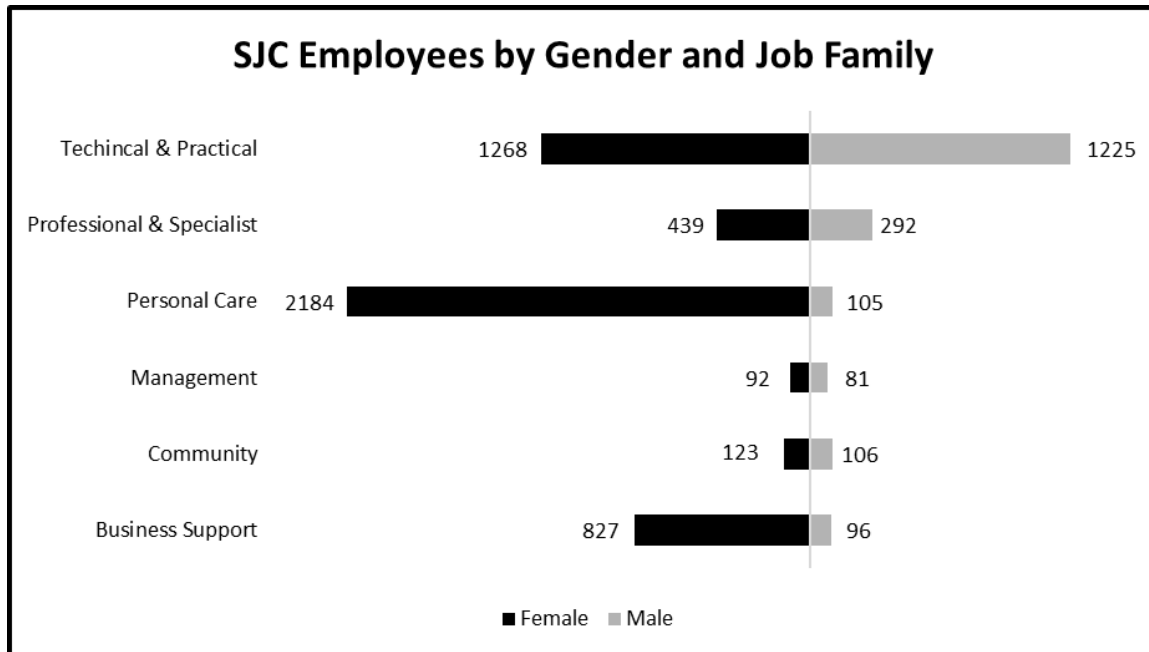


The distribution of Scottish Joint Council (SJC) employees by sex/gender (Figure 18)

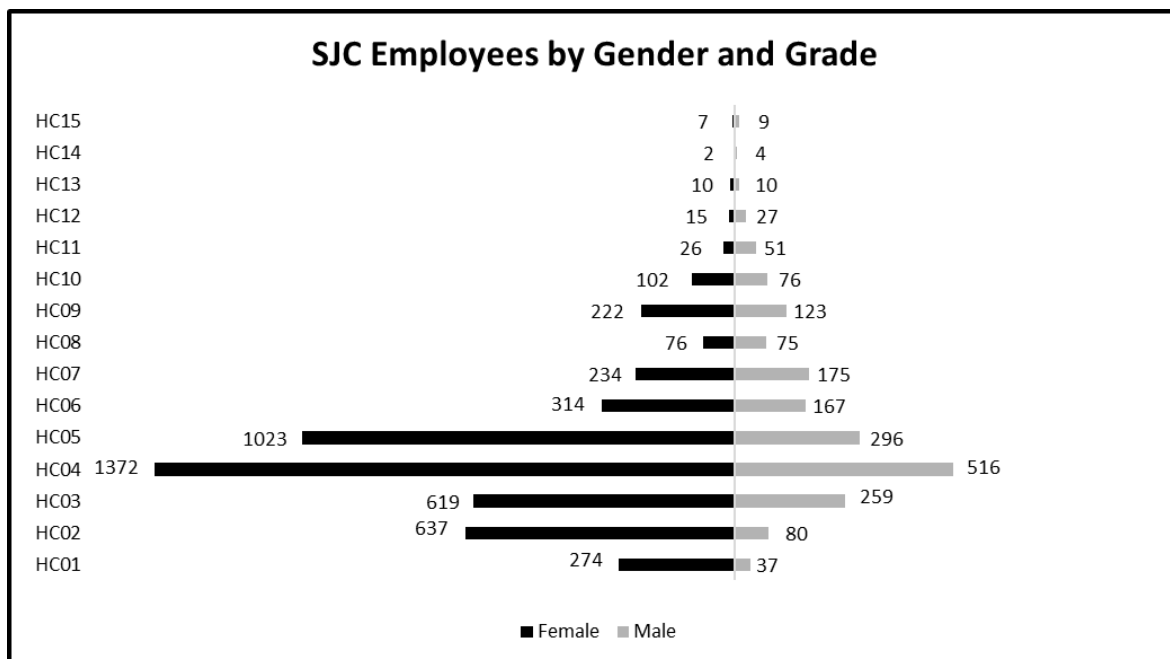
| Gender           | Female | Male | Total |
|------------------|--------|------|-------|
| No. of Employees | 4933   | 1905 | 6838  |



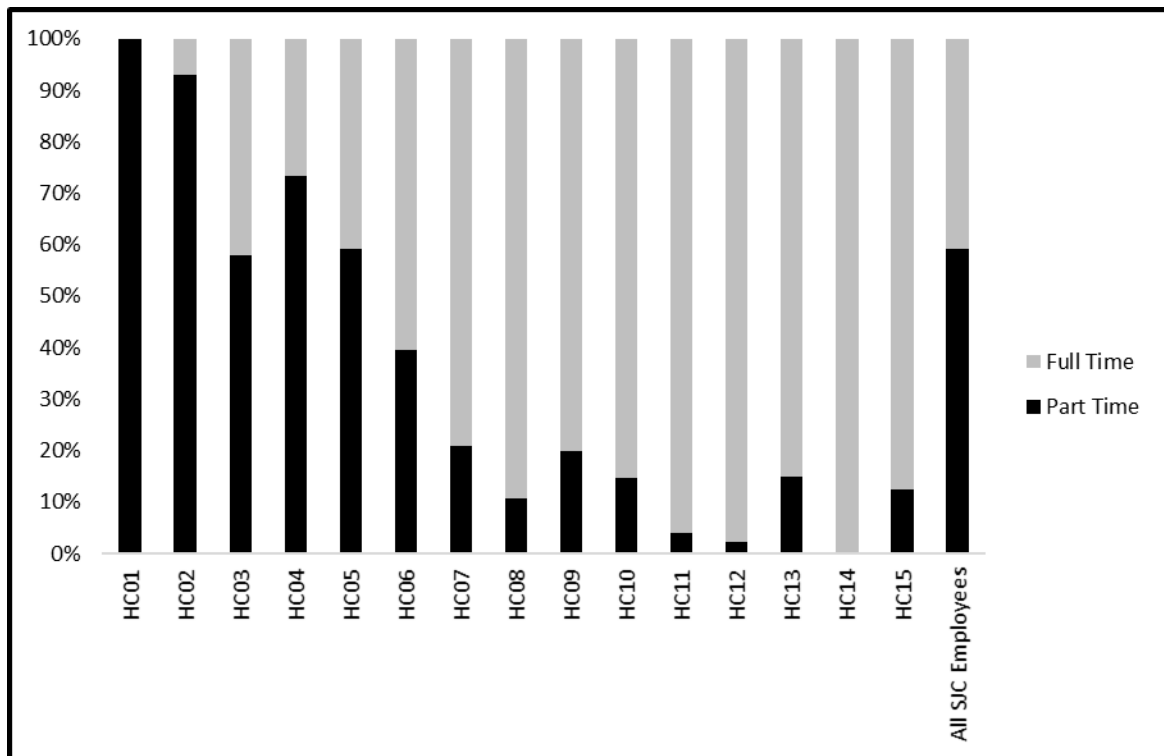
### Occupational Segregation – Sex/Gender (Figure 19)



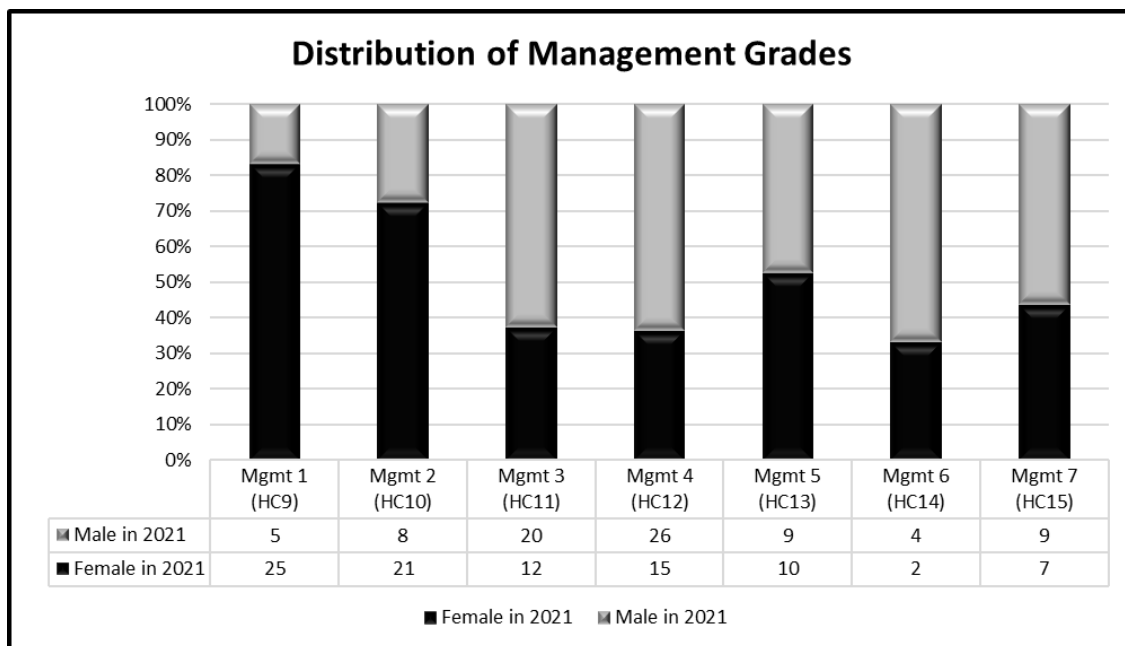
### Occupational Segregation – Sex/Gender (Figure 20)



Availability of Part Time Employment – Sex/Gender (Figure 21)



Distribution of Management Grades – Sex/Gender (Figure 22)



## 2.2 Gender Pay Gap 2021

### **Background**

Specific duties introduced in Scotland in 2012 by Regulations require the Council to publish information on the Council's equal pay gap.

Guidance on meeting the requirements of the various duties is provided by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and supported by *Close the Gap*. *Close the Gap* is an organisation, funded by the Scottish Government, working in partnership with the EHRC and the Scottish Trades Union Congress to guide and assist employers. All pay gap calculations are based on their guidance.

An organisation's gender pay gap is the difference between the average male and female pay rates. It is calculated by dividing the average female hourly pay rate by the average male hourly pay rate. The full-time gender pay gap is the gap between the average hourly pay rate of female employees who work full time and male employees who work full time. The part time gender pay gap is the gap between the average hourly pay rate of female employees who work part time and male employees who work full-time.

The Council is required to publish the gender pay gap between male and female employees. It is also required to publish this data separately on employees in Education (Teaching employees) The EHRC and *Close the Gap* also strongly advise publishing separate full time and part time gender pay gaps. It is considered that any pay gap of 5% or more is considered significant and in need on further analysis.

### **Highland Council Gender Pay Gap**

The Highland Council's most recent calculations show a continued reduction in the 'combined' gender pay gap at 5% in 2021 compared to 5.8% in 2019.

#### **Gender Pay Gap 2021**

| 2021                   | Combined Gap | Full Time Gap | Part Time Gap |
|------------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| All employees          | +5.0%        | -18.0%        | +23.2%        |
| Non-Teaching employees | +11.1%       | -9.6%         | +22.5%        |
| Teaching employees     | +4.2%        | +3.3%         | +9.3%         |
| SJC employees          | +13.0%       | -7.0%         | +23.7%        |

*(A positive figure denotes a gap to the advantage of male employees. A negative figure denotes a gap to the advantage of female employees.)*

#### **Gender Pay Gap 2019**

| 2019          | Combined Gap | Full Time Gap | Part Time Gap |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| All employees | +5.8%        | -17.4%        | +23.2%        |

## APPENDIX 1

|                        |        |       |        |
|------------------------|--------|-------|--------|
| Non-Teaching employees | +12.0% | -8.3% | +22.3% |
| Teaching employees     | +4.5%  | +4.6% | +8.6%  |
| SJC employees          | +13.5% | -6.8% | +23.1% |

### Improvements to the Gender Pay Gaps over the period 2019-2021

| Improvements 2019 - 2021 | Combined Gap | Full Time Gap | Part Time Gap |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| All employees            | 0.8%         | -0.6%         | 0.0%          |
| Non-Teaching employees   | 0.9%         | -1.3%         | -0.2%         |
| Teaching employees       | 0.3%         | 1.3%          | -0.7%         |
| SJC employees            | 0.5%         | 0.2%          | -0.6%         |

Analysis of this data suggested that:

- The Teacher pay and grading structure is robust and supports equal pay. As agreed with the Unions the Scottish Joint Council (SJC) pay and grading structure is to be reviewed due to the impact of the increase in the Scottish Living Wage.
- Significant workforce gender segregation in SJC job families (business support, personal care, technical and practical), craft and teaching posts coincide with significant part time pay gaps.
- Lower availability of part time working in SJC grades HC6 and above coincides with a significant SJC Part Time pay gap.
- Lower availability of part time working in promoted teaching grades coincides with a Teaching Part Time pay gap.

Previous pay gap reports found that the following issues could contribute to pay gaps.

- Vertical gender segregation (disproportionately low number of women in senior posts) in Teaching posts and in SJC Business Support and Management posts.
- Horizontal gender segregation in teaching posts (disproportionately low number of women Head Teachers in Secondary Schools).
- Lower uptake of part time working opportunities in senior teaching posts and in SJC posts graded HC06 and above.
- Horizontal gender segregation (males in community works and females in catering, cleaning and caring posts) within technical & practical posts.

A number of actions continue to be taken to address gender segregation and the availability of part-time work in senior grades. For example:

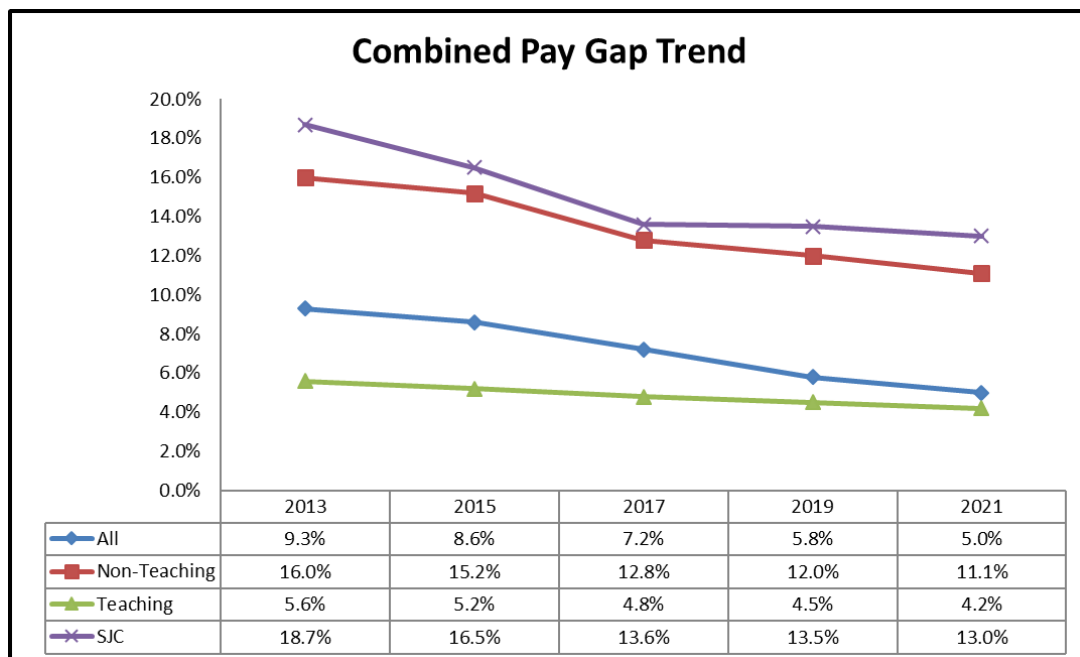
- Female role models in male dominated job groups have been identified and achievements publicised in corporate communications.

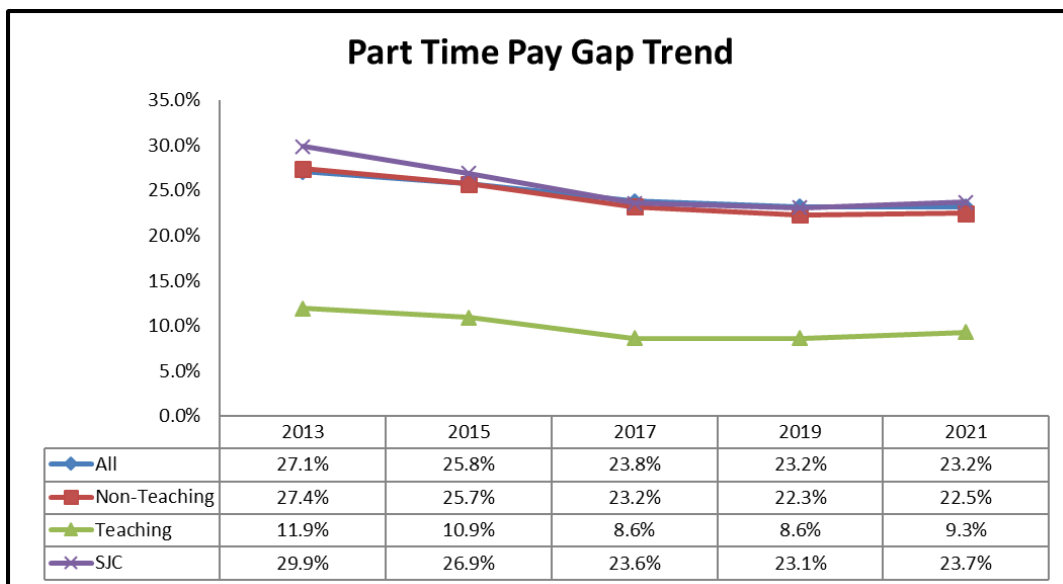
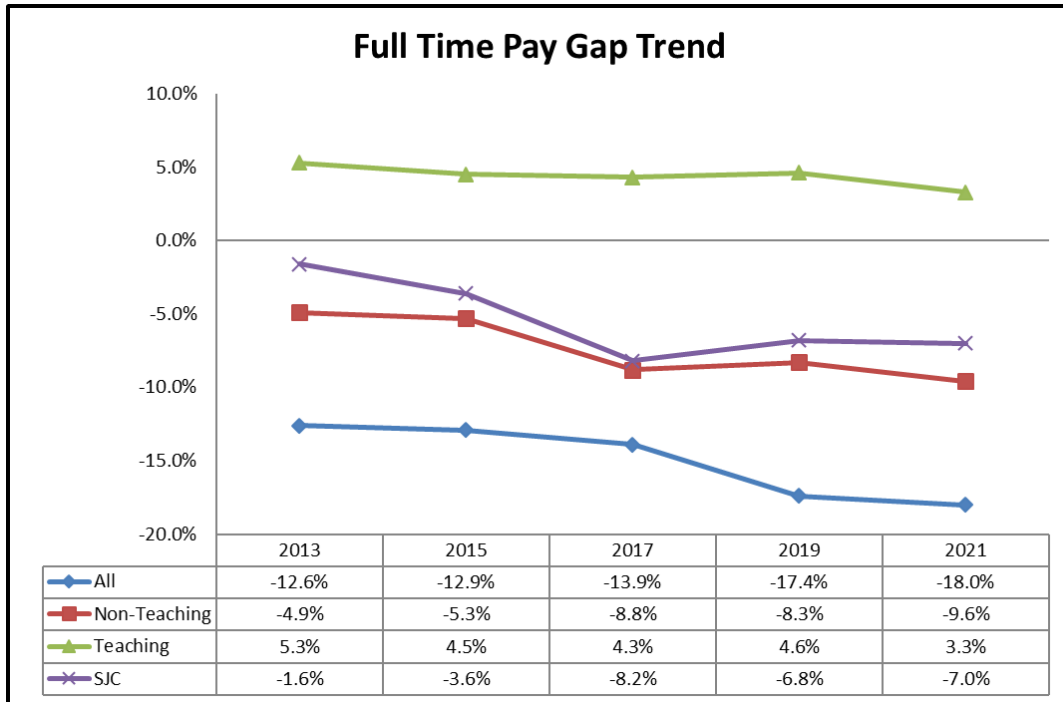


- Where service delivery allows vacancies will be advertised as "*suitable for flexible working hours up to 35 per week*" to encourage applications from candidates who wish to work on a part time basis.
- Job descriptions and person specifications continue to be reviewed to ensure that they contain no gender bias.
- Services have reviewed workplace facilities to ensure that both genders are adequately catered for.
- Significant areas of gender segregation are monitored and reviewed to identify and address any barriers to employment.
- Strategic workforce planning to address and further promote flexible working arrangements that support women to progress their careers.
- Working with Close the Gap (working towards Equally Safe at Work accreditation).
- Accreditation as a Living Wage Employer (2019)
- These actions coincide with a significant general improvement in the Highland Council's gender equal pay gaps in the 2 years since the last report.

### ***The Council's Gender Pay Gap Trends since 2013***

Trends in the Council's gender pay gaps, since these were first recorded in 2013 are set out below.





The Council's pay gaps are interesting in that the full time pay gaps are generally to the benefit of women. The part time pay gaps for all employees are more in line with what would be expected given the make-up of our workforce. This marked difference between the full time and part time gaps suggest that one of the underlying reasons for the combined gap is the greater availability of part time and term time work in the lower pay grades.

As part of the Council's commitment to Equally Safe at Work accreditation we also analyse our median pay gaps. We are currently working with Close the Gap to understand these and how they can assist us in informing future action.

| 2021 Median          | Female        | Male          | Gap           |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Combined Gap</b>  | <b>£13.48</b> | <b>£15.35</b> | <b>+12.2%</b> |
| <b>Full Time Gap</b> | <b>£22.43</b> | <b>£16.03</b> | <b>-46.1%</b> |
| <b>Part Time Gap</b> | <b>£11.78</b> | <b>£11.78</b> | <b>+23.3%</b> |

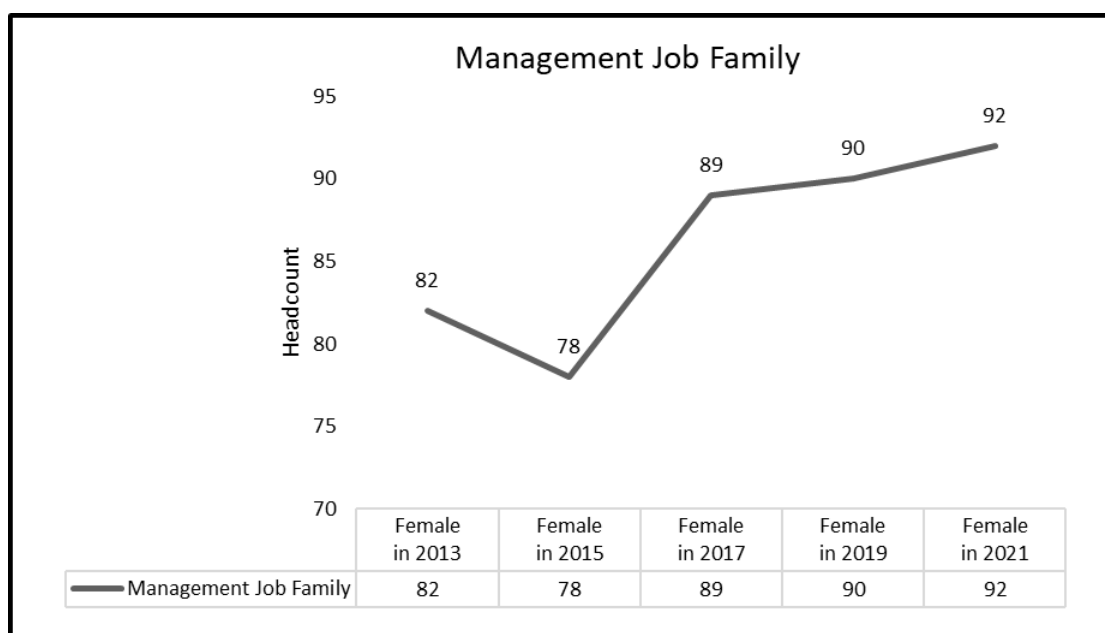
Highland Council do not pay bonus at all. Allowances are based on hourly rates already analysed in the hourly pay gaps.

74% of the workforce is female. The proportion of men and women in each pay quartile (with Q1 being at the top of the salary scales) is as follows:

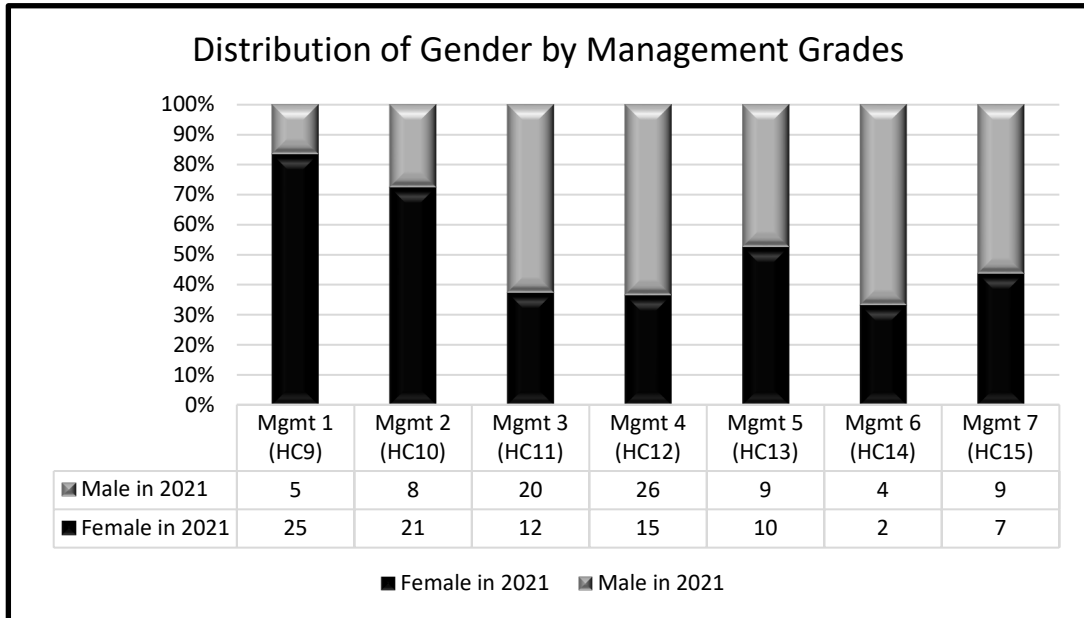
| Quartile | Male  | Female |
|----------|-------|--------|
| Q1       | 25.1% | 74.9%  |
| Q2       | 30.7% | 69.3%  |
| Q3       | 24.7% | 75.3%  |
| Q4       | 22.3% | 77.7%  |

### ***Women in Management***

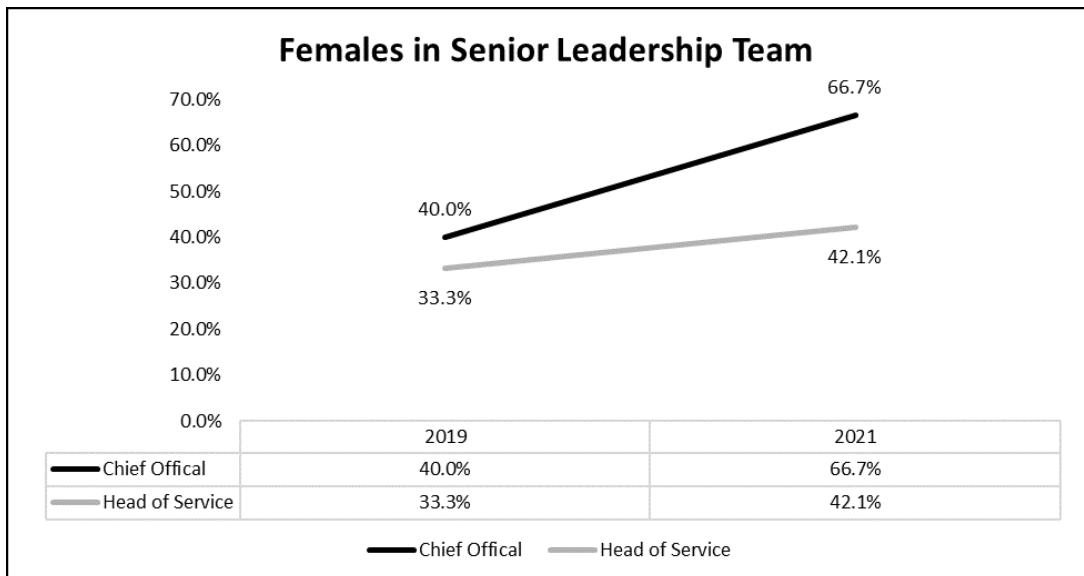
The combined pay gap relating to SJC Management employees has reduced year on year from 2013 to 2017. There has been a change in the figures with the pay gap increasing from 3.5% in 2017 to 8.7% in 2019 and to 10.4% in 2021. The increase has been directly impacted by the number of women in management grades on entry point to the grade.



In 2019 50% of the managers employed in SJC Management posts were women. This has now increased to 53.2%. However, there is still a significant difference in the distribution of male versus female managers with female managers being more concentrated in the lower graded management grades.



In 2019 37.8% of the Senior Leadership team were female. There have been significant improvements in this and 50% of the Senior Leadership Team are now female.



**Next Steps**

Although significant improvements have been made since the first Equal Pay Report in 2013 it is important to maintain momentum. This will be particularly important in the coming years exacerbated by the difficult financial situation and the continued need for a reducing workforce.

The impact of the pandemic has driven a review of strategic workforce planning. Recommended actions will drive change in how the organisation designs roles to meet future service requirements. The distributed nature of the workforce is significant, with more than 95% of employees' working out with the Council's Inverness Headquarters. Remote ways of working will increase opportunities through flexibility and supported transition with the potential to effect gender segregation within roles.

### 2.3 Equal Pay Statement 2021-2025

The Council's Equal Pay Statement will be reviewed during 2021 and will include engagement with the Staff Partnership Forum.

#### Highland Council Equal Pay Statement 2017-21

1. The Highland Council is committed to the principle of equal pay for all its employees and aims to identify and eliminate any bias in its pay systems relating to any of the protected characteristics defined in the Equalities Act 2017. (The Council recognises the specific duty relating to gender, disability and ethnicity).
2. It is in the interest of the Council to ensure that it has fair and just pay systems. It is important that employees have confidence in the process of eliminating bias and the Council is committed to achieving this through consultation with employees and the recognised trade unions.
3. The Council believes that in eliminating bias in its pay systems, it is sending a positive message to its employees and the Highland community. It makes good business sense to have fair and transparent reward systems and it also helps the Council to control costs.
4. The Council recognises that occupational segregation in the workforce may have a negative effect on equal pay gaps. The Council is committed to monitoring and analysing areas of occupational segregation and implementing actions to address these.
5. Previous analysis of pay data suggests that the greater availability of part time work in senior grades could have a positive impact on pay gaps. The Council is committed to taking action to achieve this.
6. The Council's objectives are to:
  - Monitor gender pay gaps, occupational segregation and the availability of part time and flexible working arrangements
  - Identify and eliminate any unfair, unjust or unlawful practices that impact on pay
  - Take appropriate remedial action.
7. The Council will:
  - Operate a pay strategy for Scottish Joint Council (SJC) employees that ensures equal pay for work of equal value and single status terms and conditions of employment.
  - Apply the agreed job sizing arrangements for the grades and pay of teachers
  - Operate a Flexible Working Policy that opens opportunities to all employees throughout the pay grades.
  - Challenge expectations that employees in higher grades should work long or unpredictable hours.
  - Appoint on merit, properly assessing the abilities of candidates for recruitment and promotion.
  - Make reasonable adjustments to support employees to undertake work at higher grades
  - Provide support and training to both female and male employees returning to

work

- Maintain a culture that challenges stereotypes around an employee's ability to carry out work at higher grades.
- Respond to grievances and complaints to the Council on equal pay
- Consult and plan actions in consultation with employees and Trade Unions
- Review progress every two years

### ***3.1 Progress with Equality Outcomes 2017-2021 between 2019-2021***

Outcomes set for 2017-2021 are the Council's second set of Equality Outcomes following a review in 2017. The tables that follow set out each outcome and the progress towards achieving them in the period 2019 - 2021. The previous progress report can be found at the link - [https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/20765/equality - mainstreaming and outcomes report 2017-19](https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/20765/equality_-_mainstreaming_and_outcomes_report_2017-19)

Some outcomes are shared with other key local partners. These are identified along with which protected characteristic they relate to and which of the three elements of the public sector duty apply.

Due to the impact Covid-19 a number of planned activities have been delayed and where possible deferred until a later date.



**Equality Outcome 1:** Increase Diversity in leadership and workforce participation

**Rationale and evidence:** While progress has been made in some areas of equality, we know that certain groups continue to experience poorer outcomes. Women are less likely to be represented in senior management and leadership positions and are more likely to be on poorer paying sectors. Disabled people are more likely to be out of work and living in poverty. Care experienced young people often face barriers to finding employment. Young adults are particularly likely to be in low quality employment compared to older age groups and to past generations.

Key Source: [Is Scotland Fairer 2018?](#)

**Protected characteristics:** All protected characteristics but with particular focus on disability, age, sex, sexual orientation

**PSED elements:** 1, 2, 3

**Listed body:** Highland Council. Education Authority, Licensing Board

**Shared outcome** with NHSH and HIE

**Measures:**

**Workforce**

- Increase in the percentage of women in the top 5% of earners in the Council. The percentage of women in the top 5% of earners remained relatively constant over the past four years at between 50 and 52%, increasing from 47% in 2015/16
- In 2021, 50% of the Council's Senior Leadership Team are female, this is a significant improvement from 2019 when 37.8% of the Senior Leadership team were female.
- Reduce Gender Pay Gap: The gender pay gap for Council employees has decreased from 8.6% to 5.8% over the past five years. The gender pay gap has improved significantly over the past ten years.

**Employability**

- Increase the number of people experiencing barriers to employment benefiting from the Council's employability service. During the quarter up to November 2019, Employability Service supported:
- 14 new Youth Trainee posts across the Council as well as mentor 22 Youth Trainees in post;
- 81 new young people with Activity Agreements (81 ytd);
- all stage employability pipeline support for 24 clients (58 ytd) via 3<sup>rd</sup> sector
- 76 new participants with short-term employability support (131 ytd) via 3<sup>rd</sup> sector;
- 72 Care Experienced Young People to prepare for and secure employment, including 14 accessing the Council's Activity Agreement service; and 5 currently on work placements in the Council's Youth Trainee programme

| <b>Workforce and leadership – HR Lead</b>  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Proposed actions 2019</b>   | <b>Progress 2019 - 2021</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress on Disability Confident Programme from level 2 to 3</li> <li>• Implement new equality monitoring resource on 'My View'</li> <li>• Pilot refreshed Council mentoring scheme with Women in Management group</li> <li>• Work to improve the returns of equality monitoring data</li> <li>• Working with Close the Gap (working towards Equally Safe at Work accreditation)</li> <li>• Working towards accreditation as a Living Wage employer</li> <li>• Pilot refreshed Council mentoring scheme with Women in Management group</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proportion of women in the top 5% of earners in the Council has increased slightly in 2020-21 to 51% and we continue to see a reduction in the Gender Pay Gap (5% in 2020-21).</li> <li>• New of Bullying &amp; Harassment Guidance has been developed with highlighting issues for projected characteristics. Associated with this work, 13 bullying and harassment contacts have been trained to offer initial assistance, support and signposting.</li> <li>• The Council recently been re-accredited as a Disability Confident Employer (level 2 status) and a Disability Confident Working Group established in HR.</li> <li>• The Council was accredited as a Living Wage Employer in <a href="#">2019</a>.</li> </ul> <p>A number of activities have been delayed or deferred due to Covid-19, and where possible will be carried forward into our revised set of equality outcomes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work towards level 3 of Disability Confident accreditation</li> <li>• A significant amount of work had been undertaken as a pilot Council on the Close the Gap 'Equally Safe at Work' accreditation scheme.</li> <li>• New systems to gather equality data are prepared following delays</li> <li>• Review and further development of the mentoring scheme.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Employability - <u>Economy and Regeneration Team lead</u></b>   |   |
| <b>Proposed actions 2019</b>   | <b>Progress 2019 - 2021</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the Scottish Government and partners to design, resource and deliver a new Highland Employability Service</li> <li>• A nationally agreed approach to employability measures is to be developed.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council worked at national and local level to shape a new employability delivery approach (No One Left Behind). No One Left Behind aims to take greater account of the individual needs of clients.</li> <li>• Some elements have been delayed due to Covid-19 including the Parental Employability Support programme. This programme aims to support the wider programme of work towards tackling child poverty by supporting parents to progress in work and increase their income, including parents who are disabled.</li> </ul>   |

|  |   |
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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A nationally agreed approach to employability measures is to be developed. This development has been delayed due to Covid but will resume.</li> </ul> <p>During 2019-20, the Council continued to provide young people with Youth Trainee posts and to mentor them; provided key worker support and employability activities for unemployed young people and adults to support them in their employability journey; undertake the Family Firm function to support Care Experienced young people; and provide all stage employability pipeline support.</p> <p>Employability work continued throughout the Covid-10 pandemic but needed to adapt due to measures intended to contain the spread of the virus. Services were changed to be delivered remotely and to ensure contacts was kept with clients. 'Doing things differently' meant that courses were also adapted to be delivered remotely and across all areas of Highland.</p> |
| <b>Equality Outcome 2: Identified groups have improved experiences of accessing services and information</b>   | <b>Protected characteristics:</b> all protected characteristics but with particular focus on Disability, age, race and ethnicity (including Gypsy/Travellers)   |
| <b>Rationale and evidence:</b> This outcome aims to improve the experiences of customers with protected characteristics, including disabled people and others with communication support needs. In the past, disabled people have reported that they are more likely to feel that the council is not aware of people's needs. Activities include awareness raising and promoting principles of inclusive communication.  | <b>PSED elements:</b> 1,2,3<br><b>Listed body:</b> Applies to Highland Council, Education Authority and licensing Board.<br><b>Shared outcome:</b> A shared outcome with NHS.   |
| <b>Measures:</b><br>Analysis of annual survey of Public Performance and Attitudes questions on prejudice and diversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Views on Prejudice</b><br/>             In 2019, 81.9% of respondents agree that Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice, higher than reported in the previous years.</li> <li>• <b>Diversity in the Community</b><br/>             In 2019, 65% of respondents indicated they would prefer to live in a place with lots of different kinds of people, the highest reported figure since the survey was first completed in 2011.</li> </ul> <p>No survey carried out in 2020.</p> |   |

| Communities and Place Lead – input from services  |   |
|---|---|
| Proposed actions in 2019  | Progress 2019 -2021   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow-up engagement with BSL users on the implementation of the BSL Plan on an annual basis. Working group to monitor actions and progress in the plan.</li> <li>• Review of Communication Support Services</li> <li>• Syrian Resettlement Programme continues to 2020</li> <li>• Licensing Committee to consider the introduction of wheelchair accessible taxi policy during 2020</li> <li>• Improving Outcomes for Gypsy/Travellers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with BSL users delayed due to Covid. Progress on actions has been reported to BDA (British Deaf Association) who are collating information across Councils on behalf of Scottish Government.</li> <li>• Review of Communication Support Services for BSL users has been delayed due to Covid and will resume. Services have meanwhile been risk assessed and adapted to ensure they are delivered inline with Covid requirements. Adaptations have included remote interpretation using Teams and Near Me.</li> <li>• The Council’s commitment to house families under the Syrian resettlement Programme has been maintained, although the resettlement programme nationally has been delayed due to Covid. To date 26 families have been resettled through the Refugee Resettlement Programme, as part of the Council’s commitment to accept 25-30 families before 2021. The activity has linked welcoming communities, third sector organisations, businesses and public sector services together with the families, successfully. This is despite challenges arising from our largely rural context and limited locally based services. The ongoing focus on supporting move on is ensuring that families successfully transition into mainstream services. Link to report - <a href="https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/76407/item_5_refugee_resettlement_programme">https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/76407/item_5_refugee_resettlement_programme</a></li> <li>• The Licensing Committee agreed to the introduction of a wheelchair accessible taxi policy in January 2020, including the introduction of a list of designated wheelchair accessible vehicles licensed as taxis or private hire cars in The Highland Council area. Link to report - <a href="https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/76301/item_7_-_wheelchair_accessible_vehicles_-_designated_list_hlc00420">https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/76301/item_7_-_wheelchair_accessible_vehicles_-_designated_list_hlc00420</a></li> <li>• We are actively working with residents on Highland’s four Gypsy Traveller residential sites and delivering works identified by them. For example, providing a bus shelter and installing a secure gate as well as various works to enhance the quality standard of their local environment and amenity units. As well as delivering well-received, improvements, this is enabling positive engagement which we are committed to nurturing and building on with a view to improving wider health and well-being outcomes.<br/>Highland’s Policy for Managing Roadside Camps has been updated with the aim of improving the way that we engage Gypsy/Travellers around their traditional travelling lifestyle in recognition that this is an important part of their culture and identity. The new approach enhances our commitment</li> </ul> |

to positive liaison. It also aims to reduce discrimination and negative perceptions in the wider community through tools such as the Good Neighbour and Visitor Agreement . This is being built on with our ongoing involvement in national activities around Negotiated Stopping approaches.  
Link [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/335/community\\_advice/475/unauthorised\\_roadside\\_camps](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/335/community_advice/475/unauthorised_roadside_camps)

### **Covid impacts on access to services**

During the Coronavirus pandemic the Council had to adapt the delivery of many of its services and to deliver new services such as humanitarian support to people who were shielding or otherwise vulnerable or self-isolating. Adaptations included the delivery of some of our communication and language support as well as increased use of digital communication provisions.

- Interpretation support continued to support people who don't have access to English as a first language, primarily through telephone rather than face-to-face interpretation. Interpreted support to resettled Syrian families, some of whom arrived shortly before the first lockdown was successfully adapted to provision using Whats App.
- British Sign Language (BSL) Interpretation also continued. Appointments that continued on a face-to-face basis were almost all medical (the Council delivers the service on behalf of NHH) and Covid guidance on access to premises and use of PPE were followed. NHH increased their use of the Near Me video consultation service including use of interpreters, and some appointments were successfully signed using MS Teams.
- Isolation and communication problems were also addressed digitally through the Connecting Scotland initiative and other funding. The Violence Against Women Partnership ensured that vulnerable women and children they supported had access to devices, and also that activities were provided for children to help prevent attainment gaps from widening.
- Similarly, devices and online access were provided to vulnerable families, disabled young people, and to support young people in care connect with families.
- Recognising that Gypsy/Travellers may be a particularly vulnerable group during the pandemic, information was shared to ensure that any Council and partner staff responding to Gypsy/Traveller camps and involved with residents on our permanent sites should do so in line with the Scottish Government Coronavirus (COVID-19): framework to support gypsy/traveller communities.

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| <p><b>Equality Outcome 3: As a Community Planning Partnership, work towards addressing socio-economic disadvantage as set out in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.</b></p>  |   | <p><b>Protected characteristics:</b> This links to disadvantage faced by people linked to protected characteristics, in particular, disability, age, gender and ethnicity<br/> <b>PSED elements:</b> 2<br/> <b>Listed body:</b> Applies to Highland Council, Education Authority<br/> <b>Shared outcome:</b> A shared outcome with NHSH and HIE.</p> |
| <p><b>Rationale and evidence:</b> This is a new outcome which recognises the focus on inequality within the Community Planning partnership arrangements. This links to Community Empowerment duties and socio-economic duty in the Equality act introduced in Scotland. The Highland Outcome Improvement Plan has 5 key outcomes which aim to tackle inequality and reduce poverty. 5 partnership delivery groups have been established to progress the actions and priorities within the HOIP. The Council has its own Poverty and Inequality Working Group, which oversees actions to address inequality. The Group has an improvement plan which focuses on Child Poverty, Transport Inequality and Income Inequality.</p> |   |  |
| <p>Measures:<br/>         Outcomes related to the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan are currently under development.<br/>         Progress on the Poverty and Inequality Working Group Improvement Plan will be reported to the Care, Learning and Housing Committee.</p>   |   |  |
| <p><b>Communities and Place Lead</b></p>  |   |  |
| <p><b>Proposed actions in 2019</b></p>  | <p><b>Progress 2019 - 2021</b></p>  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing an effective approach to align Equality and Socio-economic impact assessments</li> <li>• Agreement and implementation of Delivery Plans for each HOIP outcome</li> <li>• Further development of Locality Plans</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some integration of impact assessment processes has been undertaken but further work is required including the need to consider Island Impact and Children’s Rights impacts</li> <li>• Delivery Plans all agreed</li> <li>• As elsewhere, the events of the Coronavirus pandemic have deferred some planned actions and been replaced by emergency response provisions. The impact of the virus and associated measure has had a significant socio-economic impact on communities and individuals across Highland. The Council has responded to provide humanitarian assistance to people required to shield and self-isolate, and to others in vulnerable situations. This has included the provision of emergency food, prescription collection and welfare checks, delivered through a local Helpline, local community hubs and in partnership with many local community resilience support groups. Humanitarian assistance Our assistance has reached further than the shielding group and includes other people vulnerable because of health, age, or experiencing</li> </ul> |  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>food and/or fuel poverty. Support has been provided through the provision of free school meals, promoting and providing benefit checks, fuel support fund for low income families, administering low income payments to those self-isolating, and discretionary funds to community groups providing support at local level.</p> |
|--|--|

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| <p><b>Equality Outcome 4: People better recognise and understand prejudice-based incidents and hate crimes and feel confident reporting them.</b></p>  | <p><b>Protected characteristics:</b> Race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender reassignment<br/> <b>PSED elements:</b> 1,2,3<br/> <b>Listed body:</b> Applies to Highland Council, Education Authority and licensing Board. A shared outcome with NHS and partnership work with police Scotland.</p> |
| <p><b>Rationale and evidence:</b> This outcome focuses on the partnership activities to tackle hate crime and incidents, and promotes the Hate Free highland campaign. Hate crime involves any criminal offence motivated by malice and ill-will towards a social group and can be motivated by disability, sexual orientation, transgender identity, race, religion or faith. While reports of hate crime in Highland are relatively low, there continues to be concern locally and nationally that many incidents go unreported. Police Scotland has a prime operational responsibility to tackle hate crime and in Highland, the local police division and partner agencies have committed to work together towards this aim. Formal reports of prejudice bullying are fairly low in Highland schools. However, the bi-annual Highland Lifestyle survey reveals a higher perceived incidence of bullying in Highland schools amongst pupils.</p> <p><b>Key sources:</b><br/> <a href="http://www.crownoffice.gov.uk/media-site/media-releases/1329-hate-crime-in-scotland-2015-16">http://www.crownoffice.gov.uk/media-site/media-releases/1329-hate-crime-in-scotland-2015-16</a><br/> <a href="http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00506074.pdf">http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00506074.pdf</a></p> |   |
| <p><b>Measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness of the impact of hate crime: In 2019, 82% were aware of the negative impacts of hate crime impact on people in Highland – higher than any previous year (<a href="#">Citizen's Panel Survey 2019</a>).</li> <li>• Increase in concern for groups affected by hate crime: For each of the protected characteristics, apart from Religion or Belief, in 2019 there is slight decrease in concern about hate crime/incidents (<a href="#">Citizen's Panel Survey 2019</a>)</li> <li>• Increase number of opportunities to promote Hate Free Highland campaign</li> <li>• School Lifestyle Survey carried out in 2019 with questions on bullying</li> </ul>   |   |

| <b>Communities and Place Lead</b>  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Proposed actions in 2019</b>  | <b>Progress 2019 - 21</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partners to review and refresh Hate Free Highland website content and campaign materials</li> <li>Police Scotland and Highland Council to recruit additional Third Party Reporting Centres and deliver training</li> <li>Raise awareness of Third Party reporting Centres</li> <li>Continue to promote the Hate Free Highland campaign with partners</li> <li>Next School Lifestyle survey due in 2019</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review started but delayed due to Covid and will be resumed</li> <li>Additional training and recruitment carried out</li> <li>Delayed due to Covid but will support Police Scotland's review of centres</li> <li>Ongoing support to encourage reporting of hate crimes and to promote the Keep safe campaign although limited activity in this period</li> <li>School Lifestyle survey undertaken in 2019 including information gathered on prejudice-based bullying in schools</li> </ul> |

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| <p><b>Equality Outcome 5: In Highland, all individuals are equally safe and respected, and women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse and the attitudes that help perpetuate it.</b></p>   | <p><b>Protected characteristics:</b> applies mainly to the protected characteristic of sex but also gender reassignment, race, disability and age<br/> <b>PSED elements:</b> 1,2,3<br/> <b>Listed body:</b> This applies to Council; Education, Licensing Board. This outcome is shared with NHS, and Police Scotland is a key partner in this work</p> |
| <p><b>Rationale and evidence:</b> A focus on gender-based violence and the work of the Violence Against Women (VAWG) partnership.<br/>         Equally Safe is Scotland's strategy to take action on all forms of violence against women and girls. This is defined as the violent and abusive behaviour carried out predominantly by men directed at women and girls precisely because of their gender. Behaviour that stems from systemic, deep-rooted women's inequality, and which includes domestic abuse, rape, sexual assault, commercial sexual exploitation, and so called 'honour based' violence and harmful traditional practices like female genital mutilation and forced marriage. Violence against women and girls can have both an immediate and long-lasting impact on the women, children and young people directly involved. Scotland's first National Action Plan (SNAP) for Human Rights explicitly recognises that taking action to address violence against women and girls is needed to ensure that we realise the human rights of everyone in Scotland. The Highland Violence Against Women Partnership (VAWP) works to ensure that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Those affected by VAWG receive services which meet their needs</li> <li>Perpetrators are tackled about their behaviour</li> </ul> |   |



- There is reduced acceptance of VAWG
- Healthier gender relationships are promoted

**Key sources:**

Equally Safe Strategy <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00498256.pdf>  
 Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights <http://www.snaprights.info/>  
 Highland Violence Against Women Partnership <https://www.hvawp.scot.nhs.uk/>

**Measures:**

- No. of VAWG training sessions delivered (43) and no. of people attending (468)
- No of women and children identified by VAWPs as being affected by VAWG
- No and % of perpetrators of VAWG referred to interventions

*Full list of measures in the VAW performance framework*

**Care and Learning Lead with VAWP**

**Proposed actions in 2019**

- Training programmes continue to be offered to all public services including practitioners in statutory (universal and specialist) and third sector services
- Partnership training will be provided on demand and where resources allow
- A full evaluation framework to be developed for 2019/20 including impact of training on service

**Progress 2019 -2031**

Clear guidelines to support staff experiencing gender-based violence and tackle perpetrators

- Multi agency guidance for responding to Violence Against Women (VAW)
- Gender-based violence guidelines available on the HVAWP website, in addition to guides on responding to FGM, responding to GBV (Quick guide and longer version), Risk Assessment /Safety Planning, Responding to Perpetrator and the guide on The Impact on Children [Here](#)
- Involvement with the Close the Gap Equally Safe at Work project - accreditation deferred due to Covid-19 but will resume 2021/22.

Refresh priorities and measures for VAW

The VAWP is a group of statutory and third sector organisations who work to implement the Governments Equally Safe Strategy to eradicate VAW in Highlands. They represent a wide range of professionals and practitioners and have:

- Implemented the national performance framework
- Identified additional local performance measures
- formed a network across Highland designed to enable peer support, sharing of resources, good practice & information

VAW training programme

The Highland Violence against Women Partnership has continued to offer its training programme:

## APPENDIX 1

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|  | <p>Between April 2019 to March 2020, 43 training courses were facilitated, 31 from the scheduled annual training programme and 11 bespoke training sessions. A total of 468 people attended the training. The training aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness and understanding of different forms of violence against women and girls issues.</li> <li>• Develop skills and practices when responding to abuse.</li> <li>• encourage joint agency working to ensure that all victims/survivors across the Highlands have equity of access to support at a time of need and increased opportunity to disclose their experiences</li> <li>• In conjunction with The Women’s Project. 3-day training for trainers' course has been delivered to 15 participants.</li> <li>• A full evaluation framework including impact of training on service developed and implemented.</li> </ul> |
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| <p><b>Equality Outcome 6 : Children and young people will benefit from improved access to mental health services and support</b></p>  | <p><b>Protected characteristics:</b> Disability (mental health and learning disability) and Looked After Children<br/> <b>PSED elements:</b> 1, 2, 3<br/> <b>Listed body:</b> Highland Council. Education Authority<br/> <b>Shared outcome</b> shared with NHS</p>  |                            |
| <p><b>Rationale and evidence:</b> To addresses the unequal access to mental health support for some children and young people.<br/> Key sources: <a href="#">Scottish Government Children and Young People's Mental Health Taskforce: delivery plan</a></p> |   |                            |
| <p>Measures:<br/> Increase in the number of Looked After Children offered CAMH consultations</p>  |   |                            |
| <p><b>Care and Learning Lead</b></p>  |   |                            |
| <p><b>Proposed actions in 2019</b></p>  | <p><b>Progress 2019 -2021</b></p>   | <p><b>Lead C&amp;L</b></p> |
| <p>- Services to be commissioned from NHS CAMH services</p>   | <p>- A new Children’s Services Plan has been developed, including interventions from both statutory and voluntary services and commitment to children’s rights.<br/> - Online resources to support wellbeing have been invested in as part of the central team support. Tree of Knowledge is an online resource to support health and wellbeing. ClickView (a video resource accessible via GLOW, endorsed by Education Scotland) for secondary schools, has been enabled to allow access to pre-recorded curricular content which is particularly vital for pupils in S4-S6.</p> |                            |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional Scottish Government Funding was provided in late 2020 of £534,000 to support young people's mental health and wellbeing post-Covid, along with £178,000 to plan and prepare for the development of community mental health and wellbeing services for 5- to 24-year-olds, their families and carers.</li> <li>- In December 2020, the Caithness Mental Wellbeing Pathfinder Project was launched to bring statutory service providers across health, education, housing, and emergency services, third sector delivery partners, politicians, community representatives, families, and young people themselves together to move forward in a connected way. Links to report and press release - <a href="https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/77572/item_3_-_caithness_mental_wellbeing_pathfinder_project">https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/77572/item_3_-_caithness_mental_wellbeing_pathfinder_project</a> <a href="https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/13162/taking_forward_the_caithness_mental_wellbeing_pathfinder_project">https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/13162/taking_forward_the_caithness_mental_wellbeing_pathfinder_project</a></li> </ul> <p>The following supports have been provided for our school community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In November 2020, sessions on mental health and wellbeing were provided to all head teachers. A detailed information sheet and power-point were provided as reference documents for future use.</li> <li>• Information on staff and pupil health and wellbeing can be found on a dedicated wellbeing section of the school's digital hub.</li> <li>• Training and information are available on a number of topics relating to building resilience, maintaining positive wellbeing, and good mental health for staff and parents to access. <a href="https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/77740/item_4_education_and_learning_-_back_to_school">https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/77740/item_4_education_and_learning_-_back_to_school</a></li> </ul> |
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| <b>Equality Outcome 7: Staff and pupils have a greater awareness of how they can support equality through delivery of curriculum for excellence and wider school approaches following the principles of the Highland Practice Model and SHANNARI.</b> | <b>Protected characteristics:</b> All<br><b>PSED elements:</b> 1,2,3<br><b>Listed body:</b> Education |
| <b>Rationale and evidence:</b> This outcome supports work to build equality into work across schools and with education staff.  |   |
| <b>Measures:</b>  |   |

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| 88% of schools adapting and adopting the standard Equalities Policy for schools in Highland  |   |
| <b>Care and Learning Lead</b>  |   |
| <b>Proposed actions in 2019</b>  | <b>Progress 2019-21</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nairn Academy pupils will review and update the policy in consultation with young people</li> <li>Ongoing delivery and monitoring of equality and diversity training</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>88% of schools have Equalities policies in place.</li> <li>The Equalities group from Nairn Academy have reviewed the Equalities policy for Highland schools and created a self-evaluative guidance document as an alternative.</li> <li>An empowerment consultation with pupils P5-S6 undertaken in March 2021 indicated that 41% of respondents (547) scored 8+ on a 10 point scale in relation to the question 'I am involved in decisions that affect me or my learning.' 30% scored 8+ on a 10 point scale in relation to the question 'I am familiar with the UNCRC'. 43% scored 8+ on a 10 point scale in relation to the question 'I am involved in decisions that affect me or my learning.'</li> <li>Training has been created and delivered to all newly qualified teachers and newly appointed head teachers and other groups of staff on request.</li> <li>To ensure digital inclusion 273 vulnerable families have been provided with MiFi devices to enable free connectivity with an additional capacity of another 70</li> <li>6.4FTE Teachers were appointed to support learning for pupils who were shielding or adversely affected by Coronavirus, through the Highland Virtual Academy.</li> </ul> |

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| <b>Equality Outcome 8: Increase the number of young people with protected characteristics leaving school moving into positive and sustained destinations.</b>                                     | <b>Protected characteristics:</b> Disability and Sex<br><b>PSED elements:</b> 1,2<br><b>Listed body:</b> Education |
| <b>Rationale and evidence:</b> A focus on the transition of young people moving on from Education. There is evidence of gender stereotyping in Highland schools by the time pupils reach age 5-7. |  |
| <b>Measures:</b><br>Under-development   |  |

| <b>Care and Learning Lead</b>  |  |
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| <b>Proposed actions in 2019</b>  | <b>Progress 2019 -2021</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A protocol is to be developed following the creation of the Transitions Team</li> <li>• We will work with NHS Highland to continue to shift the balance of care to more community settings and to improve the arrangements and outcomes for young adults with care needs transitioning to NHS care and support (Corporate Plan).</li> <li>• Work to reduce gender segregation in positive and sustained destinations for young people leaving school continues, including STEM activities and GLOW resources</li> </ul> | <p><b>Activity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition team has been created between Children and Adult Services.</li> <li>• Data for young people leaving school and moving into positive destinations shows that Highland pupils often do less well than our virtual comparators. For some groups eg where English is an additional Language, Care Experienced Young People, those with a Free School Meal Entitlement, those from Ethnic Minorities, the numbers are small and so figures may be skewed for Highland.</li> </ul> |

| <b>Equality Outcome 9: Reduce attainment and achievement gaps between pupils with protected characteristics</b>  |   | <p><b>Protected characteristics:</b> Disability and Sex, also socio-economic impact</p> <p><b>PSED elements:</b> 2</p> <p><b>Listed body:</b> Education</p> |
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| <p><b>Rationale and evidence:</b> Supporting aims to improve pupil attainment and improve the performance of pupils, particularly those experiencing poverty and deprivation.</p>  |   |   |
| <p>Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attainment (5+ awards at SCQF Level 5) by children from deprived backgrounds increased from 27% to 31% in 2017/18.</li> <li>• The percentage of Looked After Children in kinship care increased from 17.7% to 19.5% in 2017/18.</li> </ul> |   |   |
| <b>Care and Learning lead</b>  |   |   |
| <b>Proposed actions in 2019</b>  | <b>Progress 2019 -2021</b>  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aim to improve outcomes for Looked After Children and young people with Additional Support Needs and achieve better value from resources to support them.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data for young people leaving school and moving into positive destinations shows that Highland pupils often do less well than our virtual comparators. For some groups eg where English is an additional Language, Care Experienced Young People, those with a Free</li> </ul> |   |

## APPENDIX 1

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop staff training around attachment, resilience, and child development</li> <li>• The implementation of changes arising from the Redesign review on ASN are being brought forward as part of the Council's Change Programme, with a particular focus on benchmarking the level of support required across all Associated School Groups. The aim is to transform ASN services to enable schools to better meet the needs of children, so that resources are allocated equitably and meet the needs of children and young people</li> </ul> | <p>School Meal Entitlement, those from Ethnic Minorities, the numbers are small and so figures may be skewed for Highland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been a 7% reduction in the gap between school leavers living in SIMD Quintile 5 (least deprived) and SIMD Quintile 1 (most deprived), achieving five or more awards at level 5. (Audit Scotland 2021)</li> <li>• Work on staff training on attachment and resilience, adversity and trauma informed service provision is ongoing</li> </ul> |
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| <b>Equality Outcome 10: We will meet the needs of children and families who have experienced interrupted learning.</b>  |  | <b>Protected characteristics:</b> Disability, Race, also young carers and children from military families<br><b>PSED elements:</b> 1,2,3<br><b>Listed body:</b> Education |
| <b>Rationale and evidence:</b> This outcome will focus on the needs of Gypsy/Traveller and Roma Children, young carers, children with ASN and children from military families                             |  |   |
| Measures:<br>Under-development  |  |   |
| <b>Care and Learning lead</b>   |  |   |
| <b>Proposed actions in 2019</b>   | <b>Progress 2019 - 2021</b>  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Review of work undertaken by Co-ordinator for Interrupted Learners continues</li> <li>• Use of Welcome Pack for Interrupted Learners continues</li> </ul> | <p>Prior to Covid-19, Highland Council had already invested in and established IT support for school children and families. Work over the last year intensified this support and help to enable vulnerable families and disabled young people to remain connected with services, and to reduce improve attainment.</p> |   |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Highland Council have been utilising a forward thinking 1:1 Chromebooks for P6 – S6 for over 2 years and this is a well-established and embedded approach to ensuring that digital skills and digital learning are at the very core of the learning and teaching strategy. This extensive digital provision placed The Highland Council in a strong position to deliver a high-quality remote learning and teaching, as recognised by Education Scotland in a series of professional learning conversations with our schools.</li><li>• All of our refugee families have access to the internet which we have enabled and access to devices.</li><li>• In relation to access to remote teaching, online resources and general digital access: all pupils in our 29 Secondary Schools have been given a free Chromebook or tablet to use at home and at school device = 13,228 pupils. Of the 171 primary schools, pupils in 105 of these schools have a 1:1 device (2818 pupils) and the rest have a 1: 5 ratio plus additional devices where pupils are digitally excluded.</li><li>• In our 3 special schools, all P6 – S6 pupils have a 1:1 device. Other year groups have a high ratio of access to a device.</li></ul> |
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## Section 3 Equality Outcomes

### 3.1 Highland Council Equality Outcomes 2021 - 2025

Equality outcomes are defined by the EHRC as ‘results that focus on making improvements to the lives of people protected under the Equality Act’. Public bodies were required to first publish a set of equality outcomes by 30 April 2013, and every four years thereafter. We are also required to publish a progress report every two years.

Our equality outcomes have been reviewed with the aim of continuing to tackle some of the most significant inequalities, including those exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the full effects of Covid-19 are not yet known and a fuller understanding of how this has disproportionately impacted on equality groups is under development, through the Council’s framework for community participation and involvement reported to each meeting of the Communities and place Committee. It will inform the Council’s approach to recovery.

The development of our Equality Outcomes has been informed by national and local and national data, feedback from local equality groups, national equality priorities., and ongoing engagement under a Framework noted above. However, consultation on our outcomes was not able to be undertaken as widely as it would be under ordinary circumstances. There will continue to be ingoing engagement with equality stakeholders under the framework as we recover from the pandemic. The priorities and associated actions expressed in our Equality Outcomes for 2021-25 will, therefore, be under continual review and maybe revised or new activity identified and developed

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| <b>Equality Outcome 1: A diverse workforce that reflects our community</b>   | <b>Lead Service: HR</b>  |
| <b>Protected characteristics:</b><br>Priority 1: all protected characteristics<br>Priority 2: age; disability, race; sex<br>Priority 3: race   | <b>Equality Duty</b><br>- Eliminate unlawful discrimination ✓<br>- Advance equality ✓<br>- Foster good relations ✓ |
| <b>Listed body:</b> Highland Council; Education Authority; Licensing Board   | <b>Shared outcome</b> N/A  |
| <b>What is the situation, problem or equality issue we want to address / change?</b><br>Some protected characteristics continue to experience poorer employment outcomes, this been exacerbated for some by the impact of Covid. Those affected include people on low incomes and those in less secure employment arrangements, young people, women, people from minority ethnic groups, lone parents and disabled people.<br><br>As a employer, we have some gaps in equality monitoring data of our staff. The Council is changing the way equality data is collected which will allow for more meaningful analysis and to identify actions to ensure the Council workforce reflects diversity in the wider community. |  |



The Council's "Ambitious Highland – Health and Prosperity Strategy for Highland" has invested £6 in an economic prosperity fund that aims to address the lost job opportunities for all adults, but especially the young and the vulnerable; school leavers without qualifications or employment opportunities; graduates without careers; adults facing unemployment for the first time; and those aged 50+ with work experience who are vulnerable to the collapse of key business sectors.

The Scottish Government recognises that locally based solutions and partnerships are key to employability work. The Council will deliver specific employability services but will also lead on the design and delivery of a client-centred service involving partners under the 'No One Left Behind' agenda.

**Key Sources:**

[Our priorities | Ambitious Highland](#) (THC)

[The Impacts of Covid-19 on Equality in Scotland, Scottish Government](#)

[No One Left Behind: delivery plan, Scottish Government](#)

**Links to Strategic Priorities:**

**Council Programme:**

- We will develop the range of opportunities available for young people by working in strategic partnerships
- We have an increasingly diverse population and we welcome people of all faiths, nationalities and backgrounds who wish to live, study, work or visit here.

**Measures of Progress**

**Gender Pay Gap:** The gender pay gap for Council employees is 5% in 2020-21.

Our **target** is to at least achieve the Scottish average.

**Women in the top 5% of earners:** Women are 51% top 5% of earners in THC (2019-20).

Our **target** is to at least achieve the Scottish average.

**Disability Confident:** Currently Level 2, our **target** is to achieve level 3 by 2024

**Employability:** National Measurement Framework to be established

**Priority activity 1:** Council Workforce

**Lead Service:** HR

**Proposed actions and outputs**

- Understanding the demographic of our community in relation to targeting opportunities to address underrepresented groups
  - Staff engagement will take place during 2021 to encourage staff to record equality data and allow analysis to be carried out.
  - All staff survey (Sept/Oct 21) including equalities monitoring data.
- Improving equalities data monitoring & analysis to inform focused HR activity including the [Race, Employment and Skills inquiry](#) e.g.
  - more detailed monitoring and analysis by protected characteristics following improved equality data collection on Resourcelink.
  - record and publish ethnicity (and disability) pay gap and produce an action plan to deliver identified outcomes
  - review recruitment procedures and practice against the Scottish Government's Race, Employment and Skills toolkit and make the necessary changes
- Supporting a culture of inclusion at every level of the organisation
  - Disability Confident Working Group will work towards to achieving Level 3 as an employer (Leadership status) of the Disability Confident Programme by 2024.
  - Review and further development of Mentoring scheme – rollout planned for Autumn 21 aligned to revised Executive Performance Review

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-engage with Close The Gap during October to plan working towards Equally Safe at Work accreditation from Jan 2022.</li> </ul>  |  |
| <p><b>Priority Activity 2: Employability</b><br/> <b>Lead Service:</b> Infrastructure and Environment</p>  |  |
| <p><b>Proposed actions and outputs</b><br/> The Employability Team offers a range of services to clients linked to the needs of the individual and integrated with other Council and partner services. Under the No One Left Behind agenda, activity includes work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people who are about to transition from school or who have left school and are not engaged in learning or in work, to prepare for the world of work (a key client group are care experienced young people)</li> <li>• Adults who face multiple barriers which stop them from preparing for, accessing and sustaining employment</li> <li>• Parental Employability Support including support for disabled parents</li> <li>• Family Firm Employability Support for Looked After and Accommodated and Care Experienced Young People</li> <li>• Develop opportunities for supported businesses (providing jobs for individuals with disabilities).</li> </ul> |  |
| <p><b>Priority Activity 3: Improving employment prospects of Resettled Syrian Families - provisional</b><br/> <b>Lead Service:</b> Infrastructure and Environment<br/> <i>To be confirmed dependent on AMIF funding bid</i></p>  |  |
| <p><b>Proposed actions and outputs</b><br/> <i>Dependent on AMIF funding application, this will involve work to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>develop the capacity of local employability case workers to support resettled families into the labour market,</i></li> <li>• <i>support work with local employers to improve readiness to employ resettled refugees, and</i></li> <li>• <i>profile skills of resettled individuals and improve job readiness</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Lead tbc</i></p>   |  |
| <p><b>Equality Outcome 2: Identified groups have improved experiences of access to services and greater involvement in service planning, design and decision making.</b></p>   | <p><b>Lead Service:</b><br/> <b>Communities and Place</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Protected characteristics:</b><br/> <b>Priority 1:</b> disability<br/> <b>Priority 2:</b> All protected characteristics<br/> <b>Priority 3:</b> race</p>   | <p><b>Equality Duty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eliminate unlawful discrimination ✓</li> <li>- Advance equality ✓</li> <li>- Foster good relations ✓</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Listed body:</b> Highland Council; Education Authority; Licensing Board</p>  | <p><b>Shared outcome</b> N/A</p>   |
| <p><b>What is the situation, problem or equality issue we want to address / change?</b></p> <p><b>1 Improved engagement and Involvement for people with protected characteristics:</b><br/> An engagement framework has been developed under the empowerment theme of the Council’s Recovery Plan to support the aim of better understanding the experience and impacts of covid-19 on our communities and individuals. National evidence highlights the different impacts of the virus and the associated measures on equality groups. The</p>  |  |

framework will help to gather learning from the response efforts, understand needs and potential areas for action in order to mitigate the experiences of these groups in Highland.

**Key sources:**

[Progress Report on the framework for community participation and involvement](#), Highland Council

[Poverty, Inequality and Covid-19 briefing](#), Improvement Service

[The Impacts of Covid-19 on Equality in Scotland](#), Scottish Government

**2 Improved experiences for disabled people to access services:** In late 2020 / early 2021 Inclusion Scotland's Highland Project carried out a covid-19 survey in partnership with NHS Highland, Highland Council and UHI to learn from disabled people's changing priorities during Covid-19. Over 1 in 3 respondents felt their experience worsened during the pandemic in the areas of Leisure and Recreation; Health and Wellbeing; Public Transport; Built Environment; Social Care Support; Stigma and Discrimination. Digital inclusion is an area of increased importance to disabled people. The learning from this survey and subsequent engagement should inform recovery and redesign plans.

*UHI analysis to be completed.*

[Poverty, Inequality and Covid-19 briefing](#), Improvement Service

[The Impacts of Covid-19 on Equality in Scotland](#), Scottish Government

[Covid-19, Disabled People in Scotland: Health, Social, Economic harms](#), Scottish Government

**3 Improving the lives of Highland's Gypsy / Travellers:** The Scottish Government's [Race Equality Action Plan 2017-2021 \(extended to October 2022\)](#) sets out key actions to drive positive change for minority ethnic groups in Scotland and includes a specific section on Gypsy/Travellers, recognising that outcomes remain poor across all indicators including accommodation, health and education. This resulted in the Scottish Government and COSLA publishing the joint action plan [Improving the Lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers 2019-2021](#). The Scottish Government published a [framework](#), revised throughout 2020, to help local authorities support Gypsy/Traveller communities living on public and private sites, and on unauthorised encampments during the Covid-19 pandemic. The aim of this priority is to agree and deliver priorities aligned to the SG/COSLA Action Plan.

**Key sources:**

[Covid 19 – Supporting Gypsy/Traveller Communities](#), Scottish Government

[Improving Lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers 2019-2021](#), Scottish Government

**Links to Strategic Priorities:**

- **HOIP:** Community Participation & Dialogue People in Highland will be more involved in decisions that affect their lives
- **Council Programme:** Work to invigorate local democracy and put our communities at the heart of the design and delivery of services at a local level. We will also develop the capacity of communities to decide and deliver their local priorities.

**Measures of Progress - benchmark:**

- **Views on Prejudice:** In 2019, 81.9% agree that Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice
- **Diversity in the community:** In 2019, 65% would prefer to live in a place with lots of different kinds of people

**Priority activity1:** Improved engagement and Involvement for people with protected characteristics

**Lead Service:** Communities and Place

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| <p><b>Proposed actions and outputs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use the Engagement Framework to encourage inclusive approaches to engagement with equality groups</li> <li>- Use learning through the Engagement Framework to understand needs of particular groups for recovery work</li> <li>- Improve consideration of advancing equality and tackling inequality in grant awards to encourage positive impacts, eg Participatory Budgeting, Ward Funding</li> <li>- Ongoing analysis of Citizens' Panel surveys to understand any differentiated responses by equality group to help us plan inclusive services.</li> </ul> |  |
| <p><b>Priority activity 2:</b> Improved experiences for disabled people in accessing Council Services<br/> <b>Lead Service:</b> Communities and Place</p>   |  |
| <p><b>Proposed actions and outputs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Follow-up the Inclusion Scotland 2021 survey and event and work with partners (Inclusion Scotland and NHS Highland) to arrange further dialogue with disabled people and relevant services / partners on the priority themes of the survey</li> <li>- Identify actions as a result of the above.</li> </ul>   |  |
| <p><b>Priority activity 3:</b> Improving the lives of Highland's Gypsy/Travellers<br/> <b>Lead Service:</b> Housing and Property</p>  |  |
| <p><b>Proposed actions and outputs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explore with other key Council services such as education, and Partners including Health, how we can further improve equal access to services for Gypsy /Travellers in line with the aims of the national action plan.</li> <li>- Actively work with residents on Highland's four Gypsy/Traveller residential sites and delivering works identified by them</li> <li>- Ongoing involvement in national activities around Negotiated Stopping approaches</li> </ul>  |  |
| <p><b>Equality Outcome 3: In Highland, people from identified groups feel respected and equally safe from harm</b></p>  | <p><b>Lead Service:</b><br/>Health and Social Care</p>   |
| <p><b>Protected characteristics:</b><br/> <b>Priority 1:</b> sex<br/> <b>Priority 2:</b> age; disability, gender recognition; race; religion or belief; and sexual orientation.<br/> <b>Priority 3</b> age; disability, gender recognition; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.</p>   | <p><b>Equality Duty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eliminate unlawful discrimination ✓</li> <li>- Advance equality ✓</li> <li>- Foster good relations ✓</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Listed body:</b> Highland Council; Education Authority; Licensing Board – applies to all listed bodies</p>  | <p><b>Shared outcome:</b><br/> Priority 1 shared with NHS Highland and work with other partners; Priority 2 involves work with Police Scotland and other partners</p>                |
| <p><b>What is the situation, problem or equality issue we want to address / change?</b><br/> <b>Priority 1 Violence Against Women and Girls</b><br/> <a href="#">Equally Safe</a> is Scotland's strategy to take action on all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG). This is defined as the violent and abusive behaviour carried out predominantly by men directed at women and girls precisely because of their gender. Behaviour that stems from systemic, deep-rooted women's inequality, and which includes</p>  |  |

domestic abuse, rape, sexual assault, commercial sexual exploitation, and so called 'honour based' violence and harmful traditional practices like female genital mutilation and forced marriage. Violence against women and girls can have both an immediate and long-lasting impact on the women, children and young people directly involved.

The Highland Violence Against Women Partnership is Chaired by the Highland Council (H&SC). The work of the partnership was discussed by Members of the Highland Council's Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee meeting in November 2020. There has been a significant focus on domestic abuse during COVID-19. Nationally, there is a reported increase in numbers of domestic abuse incidents during the pandemic than in equivalent periods the previous year. Until recently, weekly reported cases of domestic abuse have been higher in Highland than the average for Scottish Local Authorities. In Highland, from 23 March to 30 June 2020, of 1006 Child Concern Forms were submitted to the 'Named Person' mailbox. 278 related to domestic abuse issues. Highland Women's Aid groups report receiving 584 new referrals for women experiencing domestic abuse in the period from March to October 2020.

The partnership works to ensure that those affected by VAWG receive services which meet their needs, perpetrators are tackled about their behaviour, there is reduced acceptance of VAWG, and healthier gender relationships are promoted.

**Key sources:**

[Highland Violence Against Women Partnership work, Highland Council Press Release](#)  
[Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls, Scottish Government](#)  
[Highland Violence Against Women Partnership](#)

**Priority 2 Hate Crime and hate incidents**

Continue to work with Police Scotland and other partners to raise awareness that hate crime is a serious offence that can have a devastating impact on victims related to their identity. While reports of hate crime are relatively low in Highland, it is recognised that hate crime is often underreported as victims often fear they won't be taken seriously or worry that an incident is 'too trivial' to report. We will encourage victims and bystanders to feel empowered to report hate crime, wherever they see it.

During Covid-19, Police Scotland have indicated an increase hate crimes against Chinese and Asian and South East Asian people in Scotland, and we have heard locally that some disabled people who cannot wear a mask due to physical or mental health conditions or people assisting someone who needs to lip read have faced harassment or refused access to service.

In Scotland, the law currently recognises hate crimes as motivated by prejudice for based on race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, transgender identity. In April 2021 the [Hate Crime and Public Order \(Scotland\) Bill](#) has been introduced in Scotland to modernise, consolidate and extend hate crime legislation in Scotland.

**Key sources**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-56113045>  
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/news/equality-regulator-warns-against-blanket-%E2%80%98no-mask-no-entry%E2%80%99-policies>

**Priority 3 Reduce prejudice-based bullying in schools**

Results of the Highland Lifestyle Survey in 2019 showed that 37% of pupils reported having been bullied at least once during 2019. 22.3% of the total number of incidents were prejudice based. During anti-bullying week in November 2020, drop in sessions were

arranged for head teachers and other school staff to provide an opportunity to discuss bullying and to promote the Highland Council Anti-Bullying policy and guidance. The Schools Bullying Survey was also promoted to be used in schools during this week and many head teachers took the opportunity to do this, to provide a baseline measure for their school, for further development. They also provided a range of assemblies and activities to educate staff and pupils further in this area.

### Links to Strategic Priorities:

- National Equally Safe Strategy and local Violence Against Women Action Plan
- **HOIP:** Work with our partners to tackle poverty and inequality and explore ways of improving mental health crisis response and suicide prevention.
- **Council Programme:**
  - Protect the vulnerable in our communities, promote fairness and welcome diversity.
  - We work together with partners and within our communities to reduce inequality and tackle poverty and discrimination.

### Measures of Progress:

- **Awareness of the impact of hate incidents:** In 2019, 87% aware of the negative impact of hate crimes and hate incidents
- **Views on Prejudice:** In 2019, 81.9% agree that Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice
- **Diversity in the community:** In 2019, 65% would prefer to live in a place with lots of different kinds of people

**Priority activity 1:** Violence Against Women and Girls

**Lead Service:** Health and Social Care

### Proposed actions and outputs

Key actions are for the VAW partnership to:

- Develop a refreshed set of priorities and measures for Highland VAW Partnership Strategy.
- Develop 2021-24 VAWP action plan.
- Use covid-19 related data and partner information to inform the local strategy and delivery of the action plan.

Deliver and evaluate the VAWP training programme.

- Increase training capacity by supporting Trainers who attended the “training for trainers” course to deliver training.
- Develop online courses for TURAS and other digital platforms.

### Licensing Board

Domestic abuse training for Licensing board members to:

- Increase knowledge of effects of domestic abuse
- Increase confidence of applicants and wider community that Board members can confidently and competently deal with domestic abuse issues as they relate to licensing
- Increase confidence in reporting domestic abuse

**Priority 2:** Hate Crime and incidents

**Lead Service:** Communities and Place

### Proposed actions and outputs

- Work with Police Scotland Highland and Islands Division to encourage reporting of hate crimes and incidents



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote the Keep Safe campaign in Highland with Police Scotland Highland and Islands Division</li> <li>- Assess potential impact of the new Hate Crime Bill on local awareness activities</li> </ul>   |   |
| <b>Priority activity 3:</b> Reduce prejudice-based bullying in schools<br><b>Lead Service:</b> Education and Learning   |   |
| <b>Proposed actions and outputs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lifestyle Survey will be carried out in Highland schools in 2021</li> <li>- Actions taken will aim to reduce prejudiced based bullying in schools</li> </ul>   |   |
| <b>Equality Outcome 4: With Partners in Highland, work to reduce socio-economic disadvantage for people from identified groups in the light of Covid-19 in line with the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan</b>  | <b>Lead Service (coordination) Communities and Place (pending review)</b>   |
| <b>Protected characteristics:</b> age; disability; pregnancy and maternity; race; and sex;  | <b>Equality Duty</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eliminate unlawful discrimination ✓</li> <li>- Advance equality ✓</li> <li>- Foster good relations ✓</li> </ul> |
| <b>Listed body:</b> Highland Council; Education Authority; Licensing Board  | <b>Shared outcome</b> N/A   |
| <b>What is the situation, problem or equality issue we want to address / change?</b> <p>Covid-19 has brought health, poverty and economic risks to individuals and communities. The effects of COVID-19 will impact those already in challenging circumstances and are predicted to be particularly severe for people on low incomes, who are more likely to have poorer health and are also more likely to be in insecure work without financial reserves. Pre-Covid some people in particular equality groups were already at a high risk of experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and living in poverty. For example, we know that disabled people, people with mental health conditions and people from ethnic minority groups are more likely to live in poverty and women and disabled people are more likely to experience severe material deprivation. We know that work alone does not fully protect against poverty, with 60% of adults in poverty being in work.</p> <p>We know that numbers of people in Highland claiming Universal Credit and other benefits have increased dramatically during the pandemic. There has been a particular increase in the number of young people claiming benefits. Covid-19 has also undoubtedly changed the landscape with regards food insecurity. 4% of adults in Scotland were estimated to have experienced food insecurity from the start of the COVID crisis to 9<sup>th</sup> April. In the 5 weeks following lockdown, 20% of Scottish households with children were estimated to have experienced food insecurity. Food insecurity has increased alongside the increase in unemployment, further lockdowns and the reliance on the furlough scheme which for many means a 20% reduction in income. There are a range of very different local responses required to address the harms of Covid from additional localised welfare supports such as fuel and food poverty, but also supports targeted at certain groups.</p> <p><b>Key sources:</b><br/> <a href="#">Scotland's route Map – Equality evidence</a>, Scottish Government<br/> <a href="#">Poverty, Inequality and COVID-19</a>, Improvement Service<br/> <a href="#">Poverty in Scotland 2020</a>, Joseph Rowntree Foundation<br/> <a href="#">Budget Report 2021/22 – 2023/24</a>, The Highland Council</p> |   |

[Resources and Finance Service Revenue and Performance Monitoring to 30 September 2020](#), The Highland Council

**Links to Strategic Priorities:**

- **HOIP:** Poverty Reduction: More people in Highland will live a life free from the experience of poverty.
- **Council programme:**
  - We work together with partners and within our communities to reduce inequality and tackle poverty and discrimination
  - Improve educational attainment across all groups and reduce the attainment gap for young people from deprived areas.

**Measures of Progress:**

During 2021/22 an assessment of all services' contribution to poverty reduction will be undertaken, analysed and re-set if required. That may identify an alternative Service lead.

**Priority activity 1 Income Maximisation**

**Lead Service: Resources and Finance**

**Proposed actions and outputs:**

**Increase awareness of entitlements and sources of support available in order to maximise household incomes**

- Promoting Entitlement - Raise awareness of entitlements and where to get support with a particular focus on changing circumstances including:
  - targeting specific groups of individuals through trusted contacts e.g. tenants, BSL users, children and families, Syrian families, young people 16-25, adult learners, employability programme clients
  - Embedding referral pathways
- Addressing In-Work Poverty - Raise awareness of entitlements to individuals in work through partnership organisations and the business community

**Priority activity 2: Food Insecurity**

**Lead Service: Communities and Place**

**Address food insecurity by increasing equity of access to good quality food**

- Emergency Food Support - Support community resilience groups
- Identifying Individuals Needing Support - Targeting referral networks through universal services to ensure the identification of individuals needing support.
- Support the development of sustainable food tables and fridges in order to reduce the stigma associated with accessing food support

**Priority activity 3: Child Poverty**

**Lead Service: Health and Social Care**

**Reduce the financial barriers on families including:**

- Promoting the uptake of clothing grants
- Encouraging the update of concessionary leisure schemes for children with low income backgrounds
- Implementation of Northern Alliance *Cost of the School Day Toolkit*

**Increase access to and update of affordable and flexible childcare including:**

- Support and increase update of 1140 hours ELC provision
- Develop a strategy to promote awareness of access to support for childcare costs and access to tax free childcare



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore options with partnerships to support flexible models of childcare in individual communities</li> </ul>   |   |
| <b>Outcome 5: In Highland, people from identified groups, including young people, will have improved access to the resources needed to support their mental health and wellbeing.</b>   | <b>Lead Service</b><br>Health and Social Care and Education<br><br>Workforce Lead: Corporate Resources  |
| <b>Protected characteristics:</b> age; disability, gender recognition; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.  | <b>Equality Duty</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eliminate unlawful discrimination ✓</li> <li>- Advance equality ✓</li> <li>- Foster good relations</li> </ul> |
| <b>Listed body:</b> Highland Council; Education Authority;  | <b>Shared outcome</b> with NHS  |
| <p><b>What is the situation, problem or equality issue we want to address / change?</b><br/> Although many people in Scotland enjoy good mental health there has been no significant changes to levels of wellbeing, for men or women, since 2008. 1 in 3 GP appointments relates to a mental health problem. Around one in ten adults (9%) had two or more symptoms of depression with approximately 12% of the population of Scotland using an antidepressant every day. Suicide rates for both men and women are higher in Highland than the Scottish average and suicide in Scotland is three times more likely in those from the most deprived areas when compared to those in the least deprived areas. Poverty is the single biggest driver of poor mental health.<br/> <a href="#">Scottish Government Mental Health Strategy 2017-27</a>, Scottish Government.</p> <p>In the workplace, many people are not willing to disclose mental health problems to their managers or HR departments without fear of discrimination. The full impact of the pandemic is not yet realised however it is expected to have a significant impact on mental health and wellbeing of our staff as well as the communities we serve.<br/> <a href="#">Our Voice Citizen's Panel 2018</a>, Scottish Health Council</p> <p>More than two-thirds of adults in the UK (69%) reported feeling somewhat or very worried about the effect COVID-19 has had on their life. Mental health symptoms have remained highest among young people, those with lower household income, people with a diagnosed mental illness, people living with children, and people living in urban areas. Emerging evidence reveals a widening of pre-existing inequalities in mental health affected by social isolation, loneliness, economic impacts and anxiety.<br/> <a href="#">Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain</a>, ONS</p> <p>Stigma and discrimination is heightened significantly when a mental health problem is coupled with one or more protected characteristic, LGBT, BME, age, sensory impairment and wider disability.</p> |   |
| <p><b>Links to Strategic Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>HOIP:</b> People in Highland will benefit from good mental health and wellbeing</li> <li><b>Council Programme:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>work with our partners to tackle poverty and inequality and explore ways of improving mental health crisis response and suicide prevention.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |   |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ support children and young people to be protected, healthy, safe and responsible by continuing the delivery of a whole system approach to integrated children’s services.</li> <li>○ work with NHS Highland and other partners to help and support vulnerable adults and families within our communities.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Measures of Progress: tbc</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Priority activity 1: Partnership activities</b><br/> <b>Lead Service: Communities and Place</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Proposed actions and outputs:</b></p> <p>The partnership Mental Health Delivery Group action plan will progress activity in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Early Years, Childhood and Adolescence – a preventative approach</li> <li>- Tackling Stigma and Discrimination - supporting employers and public services</li> <li>- Working and Responding Together - stronger collaborative approach across the public, third and independent sectors</li> <li>- Participation and Inclusion - enabling people to have control over their lives and facilitating active involvement</li> </ul> <p>An equality impact assessment of the action plan will be undertaken to identify actions and accessible resources for specific groups of people including those with protected characteristics. The action plan will be updated to reflect the outcome of the EQIA.</p>   |
| <p><b>Priority activity 2: Mental Health and Wellbeing action plan (staff)</b><br/> <b>Lead Service: HR</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Proposed actions and outputs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continued support to staff</li> <li>- Analysis of staff wellbeing survey carried out in April 2021 (following a survey in 2020) will inform further actions to address concerns. to address concerns</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Priority activity 3: Integrated Children’s Services Plan - mental health and wellbeing</b><br/> <b>Lead Service: Education and Learning and H&amp;SC</b></p>   |
| <p><b>Proposed actions and outputs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increasing the skill and knowledge of staff in the areas associated with building and maintaining good mental health and emotional wellbeing</li> <li>- Engage with children and young people to gather their views of what makes a ‘good’ school in relation to support for mental health and wellbeing, to provide a progression for schools to self-evaluate their strengths and next steps.</li> <li>- Agree and implement a trauma-informed infant mental health strategy to support very young children and their parents.</li> <li>- Track the provision of early intervention services in relation to mental health support for children and young people, including Counselling in Highland Schools.</li> <li>- The Plan incorporates commitments to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to protecting young people from discrimination, and to implementing ‘The Promise’ to ensure that services and support are shaped by the voices and needs of children, young people and families.</li> </ul> |

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| <b>Outcome 6: Staff and pupils have a greater awareness of how they can support equality through delivery of curriculum for excellence and wider school approaches following the principles of the Highland Practice Model and SHANNARI.</b>   | <b>Lead Service:</b><br>Education and Learning  |
| <b>Protected characteristics:</b> age*; disability, gender recognition; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.<br>*With some exceptions   | <b>Equality Duty</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eliminate unlawful discrimination ✓</li> <li>- Advance equality ✓</li> <li>- Foster good relations ✓</li> </ul> |
| <b>Listed body:</b> Education Authority;   | <b>Shared outcome</b> N/A   |
| <b>What is the situation, problem or equality issue we want to address / change?</b><br><br>To ensure that schools, children and young people have a greater understanding of how children and young people can experience discrimination and unfair treatment and are informed of their rights and supports activity to build equality into work across schools and with education staff.   |   |
| <b>Links to Strategic Priorities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Council Programme:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ All children and young people need to be able to reach their full potential which requires a sustained reduction in the attainment gap for those from more disadvantaged communities; a focus on meeting the needs of all children and young people including those with additional support needs; and equality of opportunity and access to high quality learning and teaching across the Highlands. Everyone should be given the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and experience, regardless of age or background</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |   |
| <b>Measures of Progress:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated Equalities policy will be adopted by all schools across the local authority.</li> </ul>  |   |
| <b>Priority activity 1:</b> Staff and pupils have a greater awareness of how they can support equality and children's rights<br><b>Lead Service:</b> Education and Learning  |   |
| <b>Proposed actions and outputs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Equality policies to be reviewed</li> <li>• There will be an increase in the number of schools with pupil lead equalities groups in schools</li> <li>• Re-establish an Equalities Working Group across education and Learning to monitor key outcomes and improvements for children and young people with protected characteristics</li> <li>• Pupils will report a greater level of involvement in decisions that affect them within schools and a realisation of their rights in relation to the UNCRG.</li> </ul>  |   |
| <b>Outcome 7: Increase the number of young people with protected characteristics leaving school moving into positive and sustained destinations.</b>   | <b>Lead Service:</b><br>Education and Learning  |

## APPENDIX 1

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| <p><b>Protected characteristics:</b> age; disability, gender recognition; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.</p>   | <p><b>Equality Duty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eliminate unlawful discrimination ✓</li> <li>- Advance equality ✓</li> <li>- Foster good relations ✓</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Listed body:</b> Education Authority;</p>   | <p><b>Shared outcome</b> N/A</p>   |
| <p><b>What is the situation, problem or equality issue we want to address / change?</b><br/>         Data for young people leaving school and moving into positive destinations shows that Highland pupils often do less well than our virtual comparators. For some groups eg where English is an additional Language, Care Experienced Young People, those with a Free School Meal Entitlement, those from Ethnic Minorities, the numbers are small and so figures may be skewed for Highland</p>   |  |
| <p><b>Links to Strategic Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Council Programme:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ All children and young people need to be able to reach their full potential which requires a sustained reduction in the attainment gap for those from more disadvantaged communities; a focus on meeting the needs of all children and young people including those with additional support needs; and equality of opportunity and access to high quality learning and teaching across the Highlands. Everyone should be given the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and experience, regardless of age or background</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |  |
| <p><b>Measures of Progress: Benchmarks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of school leavers in Highland moving on to positive destinations in 2019/20 = 92.55%, those from the Virtual Comparator = 93.59; the national average = 92.99. All targets have reduced by 1.5 and 2%, not only those in Highland</li> </ul>   |  |
| <p><b>Priority activity 1:</b> Reducing gender segregation and stereotyping within the curriculum<br/> <b>Lead Service: Education and Learning</b></p>  |  |
| <p><b>Proposed actions and outputs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through the use of the INCLUDE Guidance on Equality, schools will review their curricular materials and practices to reduce gender segregation and stereotyping.</li> <li>• Training on gender bias and unconscious bias will be promoted across Highland schools and services.</li> <li>• The creation and implementation of the next generation of SEEMIS will enable pupils to be identified but their sex at birth and also by their preferred gender identity</li> </ul>  |  |
| <p><b>Outcome 8: Reduce attainment and achievement gaps between pupils with protected characteristics and also those living in poverty.</b></p>   |  |
| <p><b>Protected characteristics:</b> age; disability, gender recognition; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.</p>   | <p><b>Equality Duty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eliminate unlawful discrimination ✓</li> <li>- Advance equality ✓</li> <li>- Foster good relations ✓</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Listed body:</b> Education Authority;</p>   | <p><b>Shared outcome</b> N/A</p>   |

**What is the situation, problem or equality issue we want to address / change?**

Social research demonstrates that children and young people who identify as having a protected characteristic and those living in poverty, do less well in school in relation to attainment. They are also more likely to be excluded from school, to have fewer positive social contacts at school and as a result are at higher risk of future issues with social or mental health.

In Highland, pupils entering positive destinations has been a consistently high and improving picture with 96.5% entering positive destinations in 2017/18. For certain measures, overall attainment compares well nationally, however, attainment of pupils from deprived backgrounds is consistently lower than the national average (SCQF attainment 2017/18).

**Links to Strategic Priorities:**

• **Council Programme:**

- All children and young people need to be able to reach their full potential which requires a sustained reduction in the attainment gap for those from more disadvantaged communities; a focus on meeting the needs of all children and young people including those with additional support needs; and equality of opportunity and access to high quality learning and teaching across the Highlands. Everyone should be given the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and experience, regardless of age or background

**Measures of Progress: Benchmarks**

There has been a 7% reduction in the gap between school leavers living in SIMD Quintile 5 (least deprived) and SIMD Quintile 1 (most deprived), achieving five or more awards at level 5. (Audit Scotland 2021)

**Priority activity 1:** Reduce attainment and achievement gaps

**Lead Service:** Education and Learning

**Proposed actions and outputs:**

- Implementation of a new educational improvement approach with the aim of improving educational outcomes for children.
- A core focus on leadership, collaborative learning, training and peer support in key areas including inclusion, rights and equalities, ASN and early intervention
- Scoping opportunities for working with the Northern Alliance on understanding the poverty related attainment gap
- A review of spend and outcomes in order to understand the impacts of the Pupil Equity Funding

**Outcome 9: We will meet the needs of children and families who have experienced interrupted learning – reduce exclusions, improve the attainment of pupils looked after by the local authority, support for children from armed forces families**

**Lead Service:**  
Education and Learning

**Protected characteristics:** age; disability, gender recognition; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

**Equality Duty**

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination ✓

## APPENDIX 1

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advance equality ✓</li> <li>- Foster good relations ✓</li> </ul> |
| <b>Listed body:</b> Education Authority;   | <b>Shared outcome</b> N/A   |
| <p><b>What is the situation, problem or equality issue we want to address / change?</b><br/>           What is the situation, problem or equality issue we want to address / change?<br/>           Data shows that children who have poor school attendance, have had several changes of school placement and those who are excluded from school are over-represented in populations who do less well in terms of academic outcomes as well as those with mental health issues as adults. Those who engage in criminality and a high proportion of the prison population have had a complex educational history and a very high proportion have been excluded from school on more than one occasion. These correlations demonstrate the risk of interrupted learning and exclusion and the need to therefore maintain consistent school attendance, contact with education, develop a sense of belonging to a school and to maintain peer relationships as far as possible for all children and young people.</p> |   |
| <p><b>Links to Strategic Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Council Programme:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ All children and young people need to be able to reach their full potential which requires a sustained reduction in the attainment gap for those from more disadvantaged communities; a focus on meeting the needs of all children and young people including those with additional support needs; and equality of opportunity and access to high quality learning and teaching across the Highlands. Everyone should be given the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and experience, regardless of age or background</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |   |
| <p><b>Measures of Progress: Benchmarks</b><br/>           tbc</p>  |   |
| <p><b>Priority activity 1:</b> Review of work for interrupted learners<br/> <b>Lead Service:</b> Education and Learning</p>  |   |
| <p><b>Proposed actions and outputs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We will meet the needs of children and families who have experienced interrupted learning – reduce exclusions, improve the attainment of pupils looked after by the local authority, support for children from armed forces families etc.</li> </ul>  |   |

