

## Mainstreaming Equality Report 2021

## FOREWORD

Since the Council published its last Mainstreaming Report in 2019 and set its Equality Outcomes in 2017 much has changed in the world - in the way we go about our lives and as a Council how we go about our business.

As a public body we had to mobilise quickly to respond to a never been seen before crisis in which people could not meet, leave their homes, go to school or work, or visit people – indeed life for many came to a standstill. COVID -19 hit hard and for some people they were left scared and isolated, unable to access human basics like food.

A focus has been shone on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected particular groups of people.

Before the pandemic hit, there was already an inequality crisis across many domains such as income, wealth, living standards, labour market participation, health, education and life chances (chances of achieving positive outcomes and avoiding negative outcomes throughout the course of your life). The pandemic has hit women (particularly lone parents), black and minority ethnic, disabled and young people the hardest - with many people with these protected characteristics already living in poverty and disadvantage prior to the pandemic. Evidence now suggests that COVID-19 has exacerbated many of these pre-existing inequalities and exposed the vulnerability of these groups to adverse shocks.

It's more important now than ever, that the current response and development of recovery and renewal plans and processes focusses on those most in need, ensuring that they are not left even further behind.

With the setting of our revised equality outcomes for the coming four years there is an opportunity to get to the heart of addressing disadvantage to reshape how services support and build capacity in the most deprived and hard-hit communities.

## **OUR APPROACH TO MAINSTREAMING EQUALITY INTO OUR DAY TO DAY BUSINESS**

The Council's ambition is for North Lanarkshire to be the place to live, learn, work, invest and visit for all people. Addressing the disadvantage and inequality that some groups of people experience because of societal constructs, prejudice, direct and indirect discrimination requires a strong, sustained strategic approach directly aligned to The Plan for North Lanarkshire and a commitment from all employees at all levels to understand the causes and consequences of inequality.

In 2019 the Council published its Equality Strategy 2019-2024 setting out how embracing the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties and taking a human rights based approach to our work will ensure equality and human rights are mainstreamed into the everyday work of the Council. The strategy set out five key underpinning work objectives and the roles and responsibilities for all to achieve this.

The following section details the five objectives for success and some examples of work the Council has undertaken to fulfil these objectives.

### **1. To know and understand all our communities**

We gather information about our people through a variety of approaches including population surveys, SIMD data, Census information etc. In the last two years we have undertaken research in a number of areas to find out about the experiences of particular groups.

In 2019 we carried out a survey to find out the experiences of children and young people with disabilities and complex needs and their families during school holiday periods. We wanted to understand the barriers they experience to participation and inclusion so we could work together to improve access to leisure, community, cultural and play facilities. As we move to recover our services we will do so with the information gained from the survey.

At the end of 2020 going into 2021 we undertook a survey that explored the lived experiences of North Lanarkshire's Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people. The survey considered areas of life including community participation, wellbeing, housing, employment, discrimination and harassment and COVID-19. As we move to recovery the Council will continue the research with more face to face focus groups in 2021 culminating in a North Lanarkshire wide conference that will consider all the findings and make recommendations for action for change where we need to.

### **2. To involve our communities effectively**

*Community Matters - A Framework for Working with Communities* sets out the Community Planning Partnership's commitment to engaging with communities underpinned by a set of principles and approaches designed to deliver on a number of key priorities associated with working with communities which include the creation of 9 Community Boards.

The 9 Boards support community participation and provide a single coordinated approach to governance for local communities reflecting statutory and regulatory requirements and operate in a manner consistent with influencing and delivering the One Plan outcomes at local level. The Boards play a role in terms of decision making within a locality:-

- representing the views of the wider community or particular community of place, identity or interest in statutory consultations ;
- influencing and bringing a community perspective to public sector decisions around service design or delivery affecting the locality ;
- making decision or recommendations to public sector committees or boards around matters devolved locally; and
- taking ownership of resource decisions directed for consideration through the Board.

North Lanarkshire Disability Access Panel continues to provide the Council with an engagement mechanism on access to the built environment and open spaces with disabled people. Through lockdown the Panel has continued to operate virtually and provide the Council with lived experience to improve access for all including in the following areas:

- Local Housing improvement plan
- New schools' consultations
- East Airdrie Link road
- New local town hubs
- Ravenscraig New community park
- NLC's Active Travel Plan; and
- Puffin crossing in Calderbank, Airdrie

Lanarkshire BSL Steering Group was formed to develop the *Shared BSL Plan for Lanarkshire* in 2018. The group is made up of officers from North and South Lanarkshire Council's and NHS Lanarkshire, and BSL user representatives from Deafblind Scotland, Deaf Services Lanarkshire, Lanarkshire Deaf Club and D.E.A.F South Lanarkshire and continues to be an engagement mechanism between the BSL community and the Council. Recently the group developed a BSL COVID-19 survey to explore the BSL communities experiences during the pandemic and how and if there needs were met.

### **3. To demonstrate leadership in equalities and human rights, both within the council and amongst partners, and organisational commitment to excellence.**

Our Chief Executive has taken the lead in relation to many issues and is a champion for tackling gender-based violence. He has not only wholeheartedly supported the Council's participation in the Equally Safe at Work employer accreditation programme but has fully endorsed the Statement on Prostitution developed by the NL Violence Against Women Strategy Group. The position statement on Prostitution supports a challenging demand approach that advocates a change to the legal framework in Scotland to address the causes of commercial sexual exploitation and prostitution by:

- Decriminalising those selling sex; and
- Criminalising the buyers of sex in all settings

The Position Statement also advocates the implementation of measures to provide support and exiting services for those exploited through prostitution which again has the support of the council's Chief Executive.

The Council in 2020 was re-accredited with the Disability Confident Leader employer accreditation. Being a leader requires not only removing barriers to disabled people gaining and sustaining employment but also taking a pro-active approach to encouraging our suppliers and partner firms to also become disability confident. Employer events took place in May 2019, Aug 2019 and March 2020 to encourage local partners and employers to start the Disability Confident journey by showcasing the talents and contributions made by disabled people working in NLC.

**4. To ensure that local public services are responsive to different needs and treat users with dignity and respect.**

With the pandemic and a full-scale lockdown services needed to change how they provided their services and respond swiftly to meet the needs of our communities. For those who were isolated, shielding, disabled and or vulnerable, access to support and information in a format that would meet their needs was crucial. The Council worked closely with community and third sector organisations and other public bodies across the authority to ensure these needs were met: for example – ensuring the local Mosque had the access to personal protective equipment when they told us of their concerns in regard to preparing bodies after death; producing information on changes to services in BSL, providing information for women who work in the sex industry and are experiencing financial hardship on where to get financial support and advice;

The Council's Local Housing Strategy is informed by gathering information at a local, regional and national level. The information was collated into a number of evidence papers, including the following in respect of the housing needs of specific groups:

- Older People
- Youth Housing
- Private Rented Sector
- Specialist Provision
- Gypsy Travellers
- Homelessness and Housing Support

Our approach to undertaking equality impact assessments means that decisions that require committee approval are included within the committee report being considered. This provides elected members with the comfort that equality considerations are embedded into the Council's decision-making processes. The results of equality impact assessments are published on the council website.

**5. To develop and sustain a skilled and committed workforce able to meet the needs of all local people**

The Council's Talent and Organisational (TOD) team provide a raft of training opportunities for employees to meet both their personal and professional development needs. The establishment of the on-line portal LearnNL gives all employees easy access to the whole menu of training and development opportunities both face to face and e-learning. The following are some examples of training on offer.

Bespoke BSL training for employees tailored to their specific job area was undertaken by over 30 employees including an Elected Member. The training was provided by a Deaf BSL facilitator over 4 weeks. Employees were split into 4 different job groups – finance, housing, social work, HR - to learn together some of the different signs particular to the jobs they do. BSL awareness training is now being developed for our staff on-line.

Adapting for change training is aimed at front line housing staff and looks at how each and every housing employee can help to improve the way services are delivered by starting conversations earlier with people in terms of housing solutions BEFORE it reaches crisis point. The service is developing a bespoke NLC online training programme to compliment the classroom-based sessions which hopefully will resume pandemic allowing.

The Council issued an announcement to all staff to encourage them to undertake the Domestic Abuse Awareness Raising Tool (DAART). DAART is a multi-agency e-learning tool commissioned by the Scottish Government and developed by SafeLives. It aims to support a common understanding of domestic abuse across all agencies and covers:

- The definition and prevalence of domestic abuse
- The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018
- General awareness and identification of domestic abuse, including coercive control.

To compliment this training the Council developed a webinar: ‘Why domestic abuse is gender-based abuse’, which was launched in February 2021 and is available to any employee who has completed the DAART training.

In addition to this our equality and diversity e-learning catalogue offers a number of training modules covering, to name but a few, dementia awareness, domestic abuse, LGBT people and public services, understanding unconscious bias, mental health in the workplace etc.

The TOD Team is undertaking a review of this catalogue menu and content in partnership with the Employee Equality Forum and Disability Confident Leader Working Group to ensure it is up to date and continues to meet the needs of employees the organisation.

## Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone who works for the council, whether directly or through commissioning, is responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the Equality Strategy are reflected in the planning and delivery of their services.

Community Empowerment Committee	This Committee is responsible for taking a lead in ensuring that the Equality Strategy 2019 – 2024 represents a robust and shared vision, meets the needs of the Council, is adopted across the council, and that measures are in place to monitor, challenge and review its progress.
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Equality Champion	This senior political role demonstrates support for equality and diversity matters and initiatives both within the council and across North Lanarkshire's communities.
Elected Members	Elected Members have a role to play in championing equal opportunities and promoting cohesion and fostering good relations within their constituencies. They are responsible for paying due regard to equality and human rights in all of their constituency work.
Corporate Management Team	CMT is responsible for ensuring that the Equality Strategy is robust, integrated into all aspects of service planning and delivery, and is effectively implemented across the council. Individual members are expected to have oversight of the strategy in their areas and ensure that information about the impact of their services on equality and human rights is gathered, made available and evaluated
Heads of Service	Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that officers within their areas understand their roles in implementing the strategy and that the strategy is monitored and reviewed.
Equality Network Group	The Equality Network Group is responsible for ensuring all equality matters are advanced and fit for purpose.
Managers	All managers are responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the strategy are pursued appropriately within their teams, for gathering and making available information about the impact of their work on different communities and for ensuring that individual staff members understand their specific responsibilities with regard to equality and human rights.
Employees	All council staff are responsible for conducting their work in a way that supports delivery of the strategy and which demonstrates the council's values of fairness, respect, equality and excellence.
Employee Equality Forum	This group, comprises employees from all areas of the council. It is involved in consultation on workforce diversity and equality initiatives.
Trades Unions	Two recognised trade unions within the council are responsible for supporting their members on matters including diversity and equality and for ensuring that they are consulted on diversity and equality initiatives

### **Fairer Scotland Duty**

The Fairer Scotland Duty (FSD) – the requirement to actively consider how we can tackle inequalities of outcome in any major strategic decision we make - is the first of 50 actions set out in the Fairer Scotland Action Plan.

The Scottish Government recognised that the public sector is key to delivering a fairer Scotland and this duty is intended to help make sure full account of poverty and disadvantage is taken when key decisions are being made. This includes the needs of people of identity who disproportionately experience poverty and social inequality e.g. lone parents, older women, young people, disabled people or some ethnic minority families.

The Fairer Scotland action plan also included the introduction of the Child Poverty Act.

As a council we are committed to tackling poverty including through our ambitious council house building programme, which will deliver 5,000 affordable homes for rent by 2035, our successful Club 365 programme which offers free school meals to children throughout the year, free sanitary products in our schools and community facilities and we have some of the lowest rent levels in Scotland. A vital factor in tackling poverty is ensuring people are receiving all the benefits they are entitled to. Our Financial Inclusion Team offers extensive support to people to access the benefits they are entitled to.

The Council initially approached the FSD by integrating the need to assess decisions with the Council's Equality Impact Assessment processes. It also included within committee reports a section to be completed on how the decision requiring approval meets the needs of the FSD to tackle socio-economic disadvantage.

In 2020 the Council published Towards a Fairer North Lanarkshire - Tackling Poverty Strategy. Taking the needs of the FSD further the strategy established an approach to "poverty proof" not only our strategic decisions but our operational policies and procedures to ensure maximum impact of tackling poverty as well as reflecting an effective and co-ordinated approach to tackling poverty.

### **Black Lives Matter Working Group**

Following a unanimously endorsed council motion in August 2020 supporting the Black Lives Matter movement a working group consisting of elected members from the three political parties and council officers has evolved.

Since the working group was set up significant progress has been made identifying how we achieve positive change for North Lanarkshire. A meeting with Sir Geoff Palmer OBE, Professor Emeritus in the School of Life Sciences at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh has helped guide and ensure we are on the right path.

#### Achievements to date

- The working group is co-chaired by Elected Members one of whom is the Deputy Leader of the Council thus giving the group the profile and authority it needs to make change and advance equality at pace.
- Research has begun into the lived experiences of NL's Black Asian and Minority Ethnic people. A community survey translated into 6 languages took place throughout December and January looking into different areas of life including employment, housing, discrimination and hate crime, satisfaction and wellbeing. The results are currently being analysed.
- A survey to explore experiences in NLC employment is under development in partnership with the Council's Employee Equality Forum targeted at our BAME employees.
- The review of our equality outcomes that will set out what we want to achieve for BAME people, learners, communities and employees for the years 2021-25. The outcomes will challenge and address, discrimination, disadvantage and advance equality.
- Education and Families are committed to ensuring that all children and young people are educated in an inclusive atmosphere that promotes equality, celebrates diversity and where any form of discrimination is challenged. To support this vision, colleagues from Education



and Families are currently creating a package of support materials designed to support self-evaluation, professional dialogue and continuous improvement.

- Exploring North Lanarkshire's historical links to the slave trade and how we use this knowledge to promote understanding and advance race equality.

What we plan to achieve

- We are looking into the potential of a Race at Work Charter that will set out a pro-active commitment to advance equality in employment for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees and potential employees. This will be informed by the BAME employee survey and the Council's Equality Outcomes
- Further school curriculum development
- Continued research into our history and how it has shaped North Lanarkshire and its people.
- Community and employee engagement will be ongoing, and it is our intention that this engagement informs and influences the work of the BLM Working Group to understand, challenge and address the disadvantage that BAME people continue to experience in North Lanarkshire.

### **Equally Safe at Work**

Equally Safe at Work (ESAW) is a world leading employer accreditation programme which was launched in January 2019. It stems from Equally Safe, Scotland's strategy for tackling violence against women and girls which recognises such violence as being inextricably linked to gender inequality. ESAW recognises the role the workplace has in tackling gender inequality and as such has a key role to play in tackling violence against women and girls. The Council was selected as one of only seven pilot authorities to participate in the accreditation at Bronze Standard. The accreditation requires meeting the criteria set out in 6 standards: Leadership, Data, Flexible Working, Occupational Segregation, Workplace Culture and Violence against women.

On 9 March 2021 our success at achieving Bronze Standard was announced along with three other Scottish Local Authorities.

### **Human Rights**

As a local authority the Council is obliged to act in accordance with the requirements of the European Convention of Human Rights. This means not only the promotion of human rights but also taking this into account in day to day work. Taking a human rights-based approach is about making sure that people's rights are central to all policy and practice.

The PANEL principles, as set out by the Scottish Human Rights Centre, describes what this means in practice. Highlighted below are some examples of ongoing work that the Council is carrying out to promote and protect human rights.

#### **PANEL Principles**

##### **Participation – People should be involved in decisions that affect their rights**

This year, Education and Families launched a new policy called The Promise. Based on the voices of 2,000 care experienced young people, The Promise sets out a vision to transform the way we provide care and support to children and young people, rooted in the values of relationships, love, respect and upholding the rights of children and young people.

This policy is an ambitious call to recalibrate whole systems and culture to ensure our care experienced children have nurturing relationships in which to thrive.

Education and Families have included specific reference to this policy in their improvement impact statements for the next session

The Housing co-production group was set up in 2015 and includes disabled residents, and council staff. They work together on pieces of developing policy or procedure and to promote and encourage co-production in how we deliver services. Recent examples of the groups work are inspection of new build amenity housing and producing some recommendations for changes to our specification for future new build properties. Currently the group are assisting in the development of our new local housing strategy reviewing evidence papers and key findings prior to development of our action plans and final strategy document

In Health and Social Care, all of the 12 Locality Planning Groups have carer representation. This is either from a staff member from a carer support organisation (North Lanarkshire Carers Together or Lanarkshire Carers Centre) who are often carers themselves.

**Accountability – There should be monitoring of how people’s rights are being affected, as well as remedies when things go wrong**

In Social work, where protecting people’s human rights is at the heart of service delivery, a substantial training and support programme has been developed for staff as part of the introduction of the new complaints procedure in April 2017. All complaints, together with any associated learning outcomes, are monitored and subject to quarterly reports to committee.

Anyone wishing to make a complaint can also do this through a representative or independent advocate thereby ensuring barriers to making a complaint are minimised.

In schools, the work of advocacy services such as Who Cares? and Your Voice are actively promoted by ASN Schools. They are particularly well used to support young people with ASN at key transition points e.g. between primary and secondary school and when leaving school.

Racist incidents are recorded, monitored and dealt with across the school estate.

**Non-discrimination – All forms of discrimination must be prohibited, prevented and eliminated. People who face the biggest barriers to realising their rights should be prioritised.**

Eliminating discrimination and promoting equality through the work of North Lanarkshire Council to meet the needs of the general equality duty and equality outcomes are a thread which runs through not only this report but also Council service provision.

North Lanarkshire Violence Against Women Strategy and Action Plan and programmes such as *Equally Safe* are indicative of a human rights approach to tackling violence against women, which considers what is required to create a preventative approach to tackling violence against women across North Lanarkshire.

**Empowerment – Everyone should understand their rights and be fully supported to take part in developing policy and practices which affect their lives.**

The partnership agreement between North Lanarkshire Children’s Services Partnership (NLCSP) and Children and young people in North Lanarkshire was developed using the principles set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12. Building on this partnership agreement the NLCSP and NL Youth Council (NLYC) developed an on-line survey to assess awareness among children and young people of the UNCRC. The survey was developed with the foundation apprenticeship programme and was promoted over 2 weeks in January 2021 through NLYC, social media and staff who work across children’s services in NL. The results of this survey have culminated in four actions being taken forward to increase awareness of the UNCRC, in the 2021-23 Children’s Services Plan. On 16 March 2021 it was announced the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child had been incorporated into the law of Scotland.

North Lanarkshire’s schools embrace and teach a Rights Based Curriculum. 93 schools have Rights Respecting School status.

**Legality – Approaches should be grounded in the legal rights that are set out in domestic and international laws.**

We recognise violence against women and girls in its many forms as human rights violations and this sits in accord with a number of international and domestic laws including Human Rights Act 1998 and the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018.

The Council has worked in partnership with the Law Centre for a number of years providing funding for a dedicated part-time solicitor for North Lanarkshire. Their work’s focus is Human Rights, immigration, discrimination, and employment. The law centre has recently supported our Syrian refugee families with their applications for indefinite leave to remain in the UK - this is required after 5 years - ensuring families are supported and not left destitute with no recourse to public funds.

**Procurement**

Each year we enter into contracts worth many millions of pounds for buying goods, works and services on behalf of the people of North Lanarkshire.

We provide a wide range of services to residents and businesses in the local area. In some cases these are provided directly by us, in others by our contractors and partners. We recognise that this purchasing power can be used as a way to advance equality and, where appropriate, achieve wider social benefits, such as creating training or employment opportunities.

We have a statutory duty to ensure that public money is spent in a way that ensures value for money and does not lead to unfair discrimination and social exclusion. The promotion of equalities in the procurement process helps us to:

- obtain value for money and improve the quality of local authority services;
- ensure that public money is not spent on practices which lead to unfair discrimination

- create a diverse and integrated workforce;
- deliver more responsive and flexible services in combating social exclusion and building strong and cohesive communities;
- encourage other organisations to practice the Council’s public service ethos on equalities;
- deliver services that meet the needs of residents of North Lanarkshire; and
- improve employment conditions.

The Council takes into account in its tender evaluation and contracting processes, a potential contractor’s approach to equalities in terms of its employment practices and service delivery. We do this by asking potential contractors relevant questions and include appropriate provisions in our contract documents relating to these matters. The response to these questions is evaluated as part of the selection process. The impact of the procurement with regard to the promotion of equalities within service delivery and employment opportunities is also monitored and managed during the life of each contract.

Equality outcomes often overlap with Community Benefits and Fair Work Practices which are part of the social and economic elements of sustainable procurement. Community Benefits and Fair Work Practices help the Council to deliver its broader strategic objectives, in addition to the core purpose of a contract and value for money.

Our general policies on applying Community Benefits and Fair Work practices in our contracts are also included in the Council’s procurement strategy.

### **The policy on applying community benefit requirements in our contracts**

We believe that our contracts can help realise a wide range of social, economic and environmental benefits, including better employment opportunities. Community benefits delivered by contracts have been shown to contribute to local and national outcomes relating to employability, skills development and local regeneration.

If there is an opportunity to benefit the community, appropriate requirements will be included in contracts in accordance with relevant legislation, statutory guidance and best practice.

If a contract includes a commitment relating to community benefits, the terms of the contract will record what the provider has to deliver. Overseeing delivery is made part of the Council’s Contract Management arrangements and a record is kept of the benefits delivered.

#### **Enterprise Strategic Commercial Partnership (ESCP)**

The Plan for North Lanarkshire means economic regeneration and growth that benefits everyone in North Lanarkshire. In order to drive forward our ambitious plans for large-scale regeneration and infrastructure projects the council agreed a 20-year innovative commercial

framework to deliver a full range of asset-infrastructure related services including associated professional services from initial feasibility, through design to delivery and construction.

The ESCP will provide the procurement connection between the council's strategy and the market's solution in terms of securing a transformative alternative service delivery model. The Private Sector Partner (PSP) will be expected to propose, manage and will be contractually required to deliver a wide range of community benefits which are aligned with the Council's vision and will make a significant positive social impact for communities of North Lanarkshire. In addition the PSP will be expected to propose and manage a wide range of community benefits for contracts relating to Council funded projects and strategic projects entered into by the Council. The PSP will be required to promote Fair Working Practices throughout the supply chain in accordance with the Council's Procurement Strategy.

The delivery of social impact is at the heart of the project and the ESCP is expected to leverage jobs, apprenticeships, work placements, educational pathways to construction and community capacity building at scale as part of its offer.

Expectations for the successful bidder to deliver at scale against agreed targets be a core part of the evaluation of the project. The Project Board will be asked to consider a Benefits Realisation Plan at Full Business Case (FBC) to set out the anticipated benefits which could be realised as a result of the proposed commercial partnership. These Realisation Plan will include delivering on equality and diversity initiatives to ensure that people with protected and diverse characteristics have and take up opportunities through this major transformative investment. The successful bidder's commitment will form part of the contract and will be monitored throughout the contract term.

To mitigate the impact of local Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and supported businesses being excluded from bidding for this contract the project will develop an ESCP Project Community Benefits model to drive the delivery of targets for participation by SMEs at ESCP, programme, project and service level. The expectation of participation of SMEs will be proportionate to the services being delivered through the ESCP.

### **The policy on paying the living wage to people involved in delivering our contracts**

We strongly believe that fair work practices and paying the Living Wage can have a positive effect on people's lives and can help to create a fairer and more equal society. North Lanarkshire Council was awarded accreditation as a Living Wage employer on 29 August 2017 and in July 2019 the Living wage was fully consolidated into our salary scales

The Living Wage accreditation also extends to contracted staff where they work on Council premises for two or more hours per week, for eight consecutive weeks in the year. Extensive work was undertaken by the Talent and Organisational Development Team in conjunction with Corporate Procurement and the Poverty Alliance (a membership organisation aimed at addressing poverty and exclusion) to establish all current council contracts which meet this criterion.

## **Education**

Education sits within the now integrated Education and Families service. This, whole system approach ensures a clear focus on the child or young person, in line with Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) values, putting children and their families at the heart of decision making to give all the best possible start in life.

Equality is at the heart of all school communities and centres. In session 2020, the service introduced the Empowering Models cluster. This model is based on Getting it Right for Every Child, Inclusion and Partnership working. This model enables greater empowerment of staff to meet the needs of young people providing a greater connection between assessment and identification of needs and partnership planning to respond effectively. A more holistic approach to supporting families will underpin this

The service recently completed a comprehensive review of Additional Support Needs provision in partnership with key stakeholders. The review led to the development of twelve recommendations for future action, which in turn have been translated into an implementation plan. The plan outlines new processes and procedures designed to align and empower staff and to ensure effective management of resources to support better outcomes for children and families. Inclusion, Equality and the presumption of mainstream underpins all new processes.

An authority wide analysis of HMIE inspection results for 3.1: Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion, from January 2018 till June 2019, evidenced 91% positive outcomes (where positive is anything graded good or above).

The Authority are committed to continuing to support all educational establishment to ensure inclusion and equality are embedded in all aspects of school life. All schools handbooks include an equality statement and all schools display the Council's overarching equality statement on their public notice boards. This ensures parents and visitors are confident that they will be treated with dignity and respect and if they feel they are not then they are encouraged to share their experience.

There are currently three equality outcomes for education where performance is carefully assessed so that the Council has an understanding of what is happening for particular groups of people. Some of the performance measures include:

- monitoring attendance, attainment and exclusions of young people with disabilities and/ or additional support needs and Gypsy Traveller children;
- monitoring and setting targets for schools participation in programmes such as the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme and Rights Respecting Schools, LGBT Chartermark etc;
- providing continuous training and awareness raising opportunities for employees on equality related matters;
- monitoring the:
  - % of ASN pupils participating post school
  - % of ASN pupils employed post-school
  - % of young people from ASN schools entering MAs and employment directly from school
  - % of girls and young women participating in STEM subjects

This then allows any service development activity or corrective action to be taken if necessary.

## **Response to COVID-19**

Covid-19 has placed additional pressures on families already experiencing disadvantage and inequalities and the service implemented several supports to provide additional support during this pandemic.

To address the digital divide the Service deployed 2500 devices (Dec. 2020). This enabled identified young people, including those with protected characteristics, to access education.

To support vulnerable children and families during school closure periods Education and Families identified and implemented a process for distributing free school meal vouchers. From the first lockdown in March through to the first week of lockdown 2 a total of 324,225 vouchers were issued with an uptake of 85%.

### **North Lanarkshire Licensing Board**

The Board is responsible for administering the alcohol licensing system and certain gambling licensing within North Lanarkshire.

The Licensing Board is a separate entity to the Council itself but benefits from its members being NLC elected members who are supported through the Chief Executive's Office.

With such a close relationship the Board utilises the Council's expertise, knowledge and resources in relation to equalities including:-

- accessing information that informs its equality outcomes, policies and decisions;
- working with key employees across the Council on areas such as training and development, raising awareness of equality issues in general;
- the Clerk to the Licensing Board meets regularly with the Council's Development Officer (Equalities) to keep abreast of any relevant information and issues that could have an impact on the work of the Board;
- liaising with partner organisations such as NHS Lanarkshire, North Lanarkshire Violence against Women Partnership, Guide Dogs Scotland, Police Scotland, etc. on initiatives to raise awareness and promote understanding; and
- using Council premises for its meetings to ensure accessibility at its Hearings.

With the Licensing Board public hearings not being able to take place for health and safety reasons, due to the pandemic, the Licensing Board decided that these should take place remotely via video link. However, it recognised that this may not be accessible to all and undertook a comprehensive equality impact assessment to explore how to mitigate any disadvantage. Older people, disabled people and those whose first language is not English were identified as potential groups who may need additional support to access remote hearings. In anticipation of support being requested consideration on how to support individuals with access issues – language, sensory impairments and lack of IT skills or equipment – to participate in the hearings was given. Consultation will be undertaken with individuals wishing to participate and reasonable solutions sought where applicable.

### **Employment**

Our Equality and Diversity in Employment Policy details the Council's approach to promoting and advancing equality in its employment practices both for prospective employees and existing

employees. The policy applies to every aspect of employment, from recruitment through pay, access to facilities and employment benefits, discipline and grievance procedures to the end of the contractual relationship and beyond.

The following sets out some of our successes in advancing equality in our employment practices since our last Mainstreaming Report in 2019

### **Recruitment**

We want to be able to recruit from a wide diverse pool of people – we know the most efficient organisations are those which have a diverse workforce at all levels.

We provide a fully inclusive and accessible recruitment process

Jobs adverts are posted on MyJobScotland (MJS) and we will provide information in other formats if requested. To encourage application from a diverse pool of people all job adverts display the Disability Confident Leader and Happy to Talk Flexible Working logos. In addition we state that applications from disabled people and veterans are guaranteed an interview if they meet the minimum essential criteria for the job

- we often use images on our job adverts to tackle occupational segregation; and
- We have recently produced information on the recruitment process in Easy read which will be sited in our MJS portal and the Council website.

To assist people to apply we offer additional support and advice to people with applications where appropriate.

- On the main jobs page contact information is provided for Human Resources teams who are able to assist disabled candidates with questions about accessibility, reasonable adjustments, job specifications etc.
- all individual job adverts supply contact name and telephone number should applicants require additional information from the recruiting area or if they want to discuss access and /or adjustments at interview.
- Additional assistance is offered through Culture and Leisure NL libraries for applicants who require help completing online applications.

All recruiting Chairpersons are responsible for overseeing due process and training of recruitment Panel. Managers are required to complete Recruitment and Selection training which includes information on providing reasonable adjustments at interview and recognising unconscious bias. Managers who have not completed this training are not allowed to lead the recruitment process. A 3-yearly e-learning refresher is mandatory to continue to be involved in recruitment process

All training in relation to recruitment and selection is recorded on the Council's Learning Management System which relevant administration and HR staff have access to and can check whether a proposed recruiter has received up to date training. All training in this area is updated annually (or earlier if legislative or procedural changes dictate)

### **Employee Health and Wellbeing**

Our people management practices across the Council have been recognised through the accreditations we have received. We were the first Local Authority in Scotland to be accredited as a



Disability Confident Leader. In 2020 this accreditation was subject to external validation and was renewed for a further three years. In March 2020 we were awarded the Bronze Standard in the Equally Safe at Work accreditation that aims to advance gender equality in the workplace – one of only 4 Councils to achieve this. In addition, we also hold Investors in People, Investors in Young People and Gold Healthy Working Lives accreditation.

Our workforce Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy was born out of recognising that our employees are experiencing high levels of mental health issues, resulting in high levels of absenteeism, and the need to support them better. The Strategy was developed throughout 2020 and focuses on five priorities.

1. Develop a supportive culture, build resilience and address factors that may negatively affect mental wellbeing.
2. Support employees to minimise the risk of mental ill health by providing information on how to control stress, increase resilience and to boost low self-esteem as a way to help keep symptoms under control.
3. To provide support for employees experiencing mental health and wellbeing difficulties.
4. To encourage the employment of people who have experienced mental health problems.
5. To recognise that workplace stress is classed as occupational ill health. We will train & support our managers in proactive approaches to reduce instances of workplace stress.

We have a number of supportive policies and mechanisms to support a diverse workforce.

- With a predominantly female workforce we recognised that there is the inevitability that some, if not many, will have experience of gender-based violence (GBV). Eight employees have volunteered to become GBV Support Officers to provide emotional and practical support to any employee who requests it. We also have a GBV Policy that sets out the support that employees can expect and additional guidance provides information for line-managers and supervisors.
- Our Dignity at Work Policy that aims to tackle bullying and harassment in the workplace and provide recourse for those who experience it. To support employees we also have a number of Dignity at Work Support Officers who will support employees who wish to address bullying or harassment
- The Reasonable Adjustment Protocol aims to provide a standardised process for disabled employees to negotiate and agree the reasonable adjustments they need to support and sustain their employment. We have also developed bespoke disability equality and reasonable adjustment training for managers
- Work in partnership with the Employee Equality Forum to ensure that we build our reputation as a leading employer who is committed to diversity and inclusion in the workplace
- Our Smarter Working Policy allows employees to work flexibly, allowing them to balance the needs of their work and home life. To compliment this we have developed an e-learning module What is flexible working? This gives an overview of the aims and types of Flexible working available and how to deal with Flexible working requests. We also include the Happy to Talk Flexible Working logo on all of our job adverts opening up the application process to a wider pool of people.
- We continue to provide access to occupational health services like medical advice, counselling, debt counselling and physiotherapy and we continue to develop and promote our Workwell NL and NL Life provisions to support and reward our employees across the Council. These programmes have been well received and well used by our employees and

they will become increasingly important as we enter a period of increased change and transformation across all of our services.

### **Employability**

In line with our Workforce for the Future Strategy, offering opportunities to young people is a key priority.

Working in collaboration with senior managers within our services to understand their needs we have developed a new Modern Apprenticeship programme which has been built to meet those needs. The programme has been fully aligned to offer opportunities to young people from across all of our communities, inspiring them into rewarding careers. To do this, we have worked alongside our recruitment team to strengthen and enhance the recruitment process making it accessible to all, created robust guidance for managers and young people setting out clear expectations on roles and responsibilities as well as strengthening the level of support an apprentice will receive whilst in their placement. This will include each trainee being assigned with a designated college assessor to support their qualification, an Early Careers Supervisor to support them in the placement and a placement 'buddy' who will perform the role of a mentor.

In addition, all placement managers and buddies will be given the opportunity to undertake tailored e-learning modules to support them in dealing with and understanding the challenges which young people may face. The TOD team will also work with the Employability team to support apprentices when they are ready to seek employment opportunities. This support will continue for 12 months post placement signposting appropriate services and providing advice where required.

Aside to our support for the Modern Apprentice Programme we have fully supported the highly successful Winter Leavers and Family Firm programmes with Mentor programmes, skills and rotational work placement activities to help build confidence and employability skills in our most disadvantaged children. our Graduate Apprentices, with over forty of our own staff now taking part in Graduate Apprenticeships to further their career and their future earnings potential.

### **Employee Engagement**

We use a variety of means to engage with employees around equality issues.

In the lead up to the Council migration from Windows to Office 365 it carried out a survey of employees who use Assistive Technology to gauge their experiences. From the survey group a few employees tested the in-built accessibility features of O365 to see whether the in-built features could enhance or even replace their current AT. These inbuilt features are being promoted to all employees and an e-learning module is being developed.

Our Disability Confident Leader Working Group was set up to ensure the Council continues to meet its DCL commitments. It was deemed essential that disabled employees were invited to be members of this group, to not only provide the experience of disabled people in improvement actions, but also for the credibility of the group.

Over the past two years we have carried out a number of employee surveys which we analyse to help us support our workforce better and to advance equality.

- In relation to our participation in Equally Safe at Work we surveyed all line managers to gather data about Gender Based Violence: Number of reports of disclosures made to line managers; the form of violence against women which is reported or disclosed and Employee satisfaction with how the disclosure was handled
- As part of the commitments for our Healthy Working Lives accreditation we carry out an employee health needs assessment survey every 3 years.
- Since the Pandemic and the move for many employees to home working, we have carried out surveys to hear from our employees how they are faring working from home both personally and professionally.

### **Employee Equality Forum (EEF)**

The EEF was set up by the Council as a collective, co-ordinated resource to enable employees with protected characteristics to influence organisational strategies, policies and procedures for promoting equality, and tackling discrimination.

Before the pandemic struck the EEF Planning Group organised events and awareness raising opportunities for all employees. - providing a space where they could come together to have a focus on different issues. For instance, in 2019 Planning Group members arranged two information stations to commemorate Holocaust Memorial and organised a BSL awareness session with a local BSL organisation. for employees.

While the pandemic has had an impact on bringing employees together the group has still been active.

In partnership with the Black Live Matter Working Group EEF members have been developing a survey to find out the experiences of our Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Employees. This survey will look at the jobs they do, opportunities for progression, their experiences in the workplace. The findings will inform recommendations for any appropriate action.

It has continues to be involved in a range of employment and organisational policies and developments including:

- the review of the equality and diversity e-learning catalogue
- the review of the managing attendance policy
- Disability Confident Leader Working Group
- Digital NL and the Migration to Office 365

### **Equal Pay Audit information**

In November 2020 the Council undertook an equal Pay Audit. The biggest challenge for North Lanarkshire Council is occupational segregation. There is no evidence that the gender pay gap is attributable to direct or indirect unfair discrimination in processes or decision making. The possible reason for the pay gap could be linked to female concentration in part time work and elements of occupational segregation. Female employees are heavily concentrated in lower paid roles and in particular kinds of roles.

Tackling occupational segregation is a significant challenge given the complexity of the issue with external factors such as gender stereotyping from birth; career choices through school/vocational education; availability of child care, etc all having an impact as well as employment factors such as opportunities for flexible working.

The majority of employees (68.8%) are working under the Local Government Employee terms and conditions and their roles have been evaluated using the Scottish Joint Council Job Evaluation Scheme. There is no evidence that the pay and grading structure contains any gender bias. This data provides reassurance that the Scottish Joint Councils Job Evaluation Scheme and the Re-evaluation Procedures implemented by North Lanarkshire Council are robust and meeting equality requirements for posts of equal work. It is likely that the dominance of females in particular grades is a result of gender typical job choices.

*Key future actions highlighted by the audit*

- Ensure regular reporting and analysis on gender pay gap.
- Continue to adopt a robust and consistent approach to the grading of new posts and the consideration of re-evaluation requests.
- Continued encouragement of staff to complete the equalities information on iTrent to allow reporting to be broadened on disability, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation.
- Research indicates that flexible working is one approach that can assist with reducing occupational segregation. Existing Smarter Working policies and procedures will be kept under review to ensure that they continue to meet the Council and employees' needs.
- Continue to apply fair recruitment and selection practices.