

Equality Outcomes – Progress 2021-2023

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1. Introduction

Fife Council approved its [equality and diversity outcomes in 2021](#) following extensive consultation and engagement with protected characteristics led by Fife Centre for Equalities. Although there is much equality and diversity work that goes on in the Council, feedback from the engagement exercise ensured that the Council was taking forward outcomes and actions which would benefit as many people as possible.

The outcomes and actions approved covered a four year period – this report is a mid-term update on what has been achieved so far in relation to some of the actions.

Starting with a brief overview of the Public Section Equality Duty requirements, this document also sets (in Section 2) out some of the national legislative context since the original outcomes were published in 2021. Section 3 then outlines the achievements to date.

2. Public Sector Equality Duty & National Context

Public Sector Equality Duty

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 came into force in April 2011, introducing a new Public Sector Equality Duty that became law across Scotland. The public sector equality duty has 3 parts which all public authorities need to comply with. The 3 parts are called the general duty and public authorities need to consider each of these:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who have a protected characteristics and those who do not
- Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race – this includes ethnic or national origin, colour and nationality. This includes Gypsy Travellers
- Religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The public sector equality duty under the Equality Act requires the Council to:

- **Mainstream** – How the duty is being integrated into other functions undertaken by the Council.
- **Set equality outcomes** – The results which the authority wishes to achieve. The outcomes must have been set with the engagement of protected characteristics and/or evidence relating to the protected characteristics.
- **Involve** all protected characteristics - and anyone else the local authority considers represents the interests of people with protected characteristics.
- Consider **relevant evidence** relating to people with protected characteristics.
- **Assess** and review policies and practices.
- **Gather** and use employment information.
- **Publish** a revised set of outcomes within a reasonable timescale.

National Context

Interpreting, Translation and Transcription Services Framework

Covering the period 2021-2025, the Scottish Government has circulated the above Framework which sets out the provision of interpreting, translation and transcription services. The Framework is available to the public sector including local authorities and third sector organisations. The scope of the Framework covers:

- Face-to-face, remote video and telephone interpreting
- Translation and transcription services
- Text to speech (audio)

Fife Council already has an agreement in place with DA Languages until February 2024 for translation and transcription services and will use the above Framework thereafter. Face to face interpreting is currently provided by Fife Community Interpreting Service.

Further information can be found via gov.scot: [Interpreting, translation and transcription services framework - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/interpreting-translation-transcription-services-framework/pages/1-1.aspx)

Hate Crime Strategy for Scotland 2023

The Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 will modernise, consolidate and extend existing hate crime law in Scotland. Currently, the law currently recognises hate crime based on prejudice towards the following protected characteristics:

- disability
- race
- religion
- sexual orientation
- transgender identity

The Act will now:

- introduce new protections against offences aggravated by prejudice towards a person's age;
- provide new 'stirring up of hatred' offences covering all characteristics protected in the updated legislative framework;
- require information about police recorded hate crime and convictions data to be published annually, and with greater detail where known.

More details about the [Strategy](#) and commitments can be found here.

In Fife, Police Scotland chairs a Hate Crime Core Group working in partnership with NHS, Fife Council and Third Sector organisations to discuss incidents of hate crime. and identify where there may be patterns of incidents either geographically or

against particular protected characteristics. Fife Council separately has a Hate Incidents procedure and policy.

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

The Bill simplifies the process by which a trans person can obtain a gender recognition certificate. Key provision in the Bill include:

- the Registrar General for Scotland would consider applications instead of the Gender Recognition Panel which is a UK tribunal;
- applicants would not need to submit a medical diagnosis and evidence to support the application (as current process needs)
- applicants would make a statutory declaration that they have lived in the acquired gender for at least three months before applying (rather than the current period of two years) and that they intend to live permanently in their acquired gender
- the application would then be determined by the Registrar General after a three month reflection period if the applicant confirms they want to proceed;
- applicants would either be the subject of an entry in a birth or adoption record kept by the Registrar General, or be ordinarily resident in Scotland
- the minimum age of applicants would be 16, rather than 18 at present.

The Scottish Government was keen to point out that the Bill would not make any changes to the reserved Equality Act 2010 and that the Government would continue to support the provision of single-sex services and the rights of women.

The Bill completed the final stage of the Scottish legislative process in December 2022. However, on 17 January 2023, the UK Government used section 35 of the Scotland Act 1998 to block the Bill from receiving royal assent. At the time of writing, there is no further update on the Bill receiving royal assent.

More information about the Bill and what is covered can be found at this [link](#).

A new Human Rights Bill for Scotland

The Scottish Human Rights Commission has worked for many years to support the incorporation of four United Nations Human Rights treaties into Scots Law, including legislation that enhances economic, social and cultural rights, and the human rights of women, disabled people and minority ethnic communities in Scotland. The Scottish Government has stated it will open a consultation on the Bill this year. The Scottish Human Rights Commission gathered views from people across Scotland on how the new law should work – read the [report](#) here.

3. Progress on Equality & Diversity Outcomes 2021-2023

The Council set five equality outcomes for the period 2021-2025. The Senior Equalities Group regularly receives updates on how the outcomes and actions are being implemented across the Council. This section provides an update on some of the work that has been achieved during the first two years of setting the outcomes.

Outcome 1: Fife's communities are provided with services and information accessible to them particularly those who face barriers through disability, language and digital exclusion.

Online Accessibility Update

Our Accessibility Statement and roadmap to compliance are now publicly available on fife.gov.uk and are reviewed regularly and progress updated.

An external accessibility audit of all Fife Council online services was completed in 2022 and regular checks are now ongoing using the Silktide platform. The Online Services Team is working towards improving scores for Content, Accessibility and User Experience which includes performance on a mobile.

Accessibility standards for online content are now being enforced by the Online Services Team. Any requests for new content or edits to content on the site are subject to accessibility checks. There has been a concerted effort to reduce the number of publications uploaded to the website. When publications are uploaded, the Online Services team work with services to ensure these are as accessible as they can be.

Training has been made available to all staff in an attempt to raise awareness and increase compliance with Word documents and PDFs. Tools such as Microsoft's Inclusivity kit have been added to the 'Making Files More Accessible' section in the IT Skills Hub.

Two online accessibility awareness webinars were held in August and September 2022 to raise awareness and encourage conversations about accessible communication throughout the council. These sessions were attended by almost 100 members of staff.

Making social media posts accessible is now covered as part of the mandatory Social Media Policy and Moderator Training which every new social media moderator must attend. Accessibility of social media posts is also picked up as part of regular spot checks carried out on Fife Council social media pages and accounts. Any issues are discussed with the moderators for those pages.

Going Forward

A cross council Accessibility Working Group is currently being set up with the first meeting of the group to be held within the next two months.

The Online Services team is committed to carrying out regular user testing of online content. An internal Testing Group will be set up initially to provide real user testing of the website, online forms and social media. This will progress to working with external customers.

One outstanding area on the accessibility roadmap is Committee Papers. These are an ongoing issue due to the way packs are compiled. Online Services is working closely with Committee Services to find a solution.

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Outcome 2: Women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse – and the attitudes that help perpetuate it

Equally Safe – Scotland’s strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls is the key national driver for Fife Violence Against Women Partnership. The Delivery Plan and local area Quality Standards work to the following four priorities that have been adopted by partners locally:

- *Equally Safe Priority 1:* Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls;
- *Equally Safe Priority 2:* Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically, and politically;
- *Equally Safe Priority 3:* Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women children and young people;
- *Equally Safe Priority 4:* Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.

Fife Violence Against Women Partnership (FVAWP) has adopted the [Equally Safe](#) strategy and the framework has been used to self-assess progress locally, identifying strengths and weaknesses and forms the basis of FVAWP Action Plan 2019-22.

Some of the progress made against each of the four priorities mentioned above is set out below.

Priority 1

There have been a series FVAWP public awareness campaigns linked to national campaigns. In addition, FVAWP has worked with the Community Safety Partnership to develop a women’s safety campaign and the University of St Andrews and Fife Rape and Sexual Assault Centre to show an art exhibition “*What were you wearing?*”. FVAWP is currently arranging for the exhibition to be seen at a range of venues across Fife.

These initiatives provided an opportunity to further promote local services. Additional initiatives to support prevention work in schools and other settings was more challenging but is increasing again.

Priority 2

FVAWP worked with the Senior Equalities Group highlighting the inequalities of outcome for women, children and young people with lived experience of VAW&G, including in terms of Covid. Fife Council has been accepted onto the Equally Safe Employer Accreditation Programme and is working towards gaining a bronze award, this is led by Human Resources. It is an eighteen-month programme which started in March 2022. Substantial preparatory work has been undertaken in terms of updating policies and guidance.

Priority 3

Covid presented major challenges, however services continued to be delivered in a range of ways, with good service user feedback and new initiatives developed including:

- Joint research with ADP undertaken by Scottish Drugs Forum to ask women with lived experience what the barriers are to accessing and staying engaged with services
- Join the Dots a new Fife Women's Aid Service for children and young people based on a model of additional and intensive support was launched providing opportunities to explore the impact of domestic abuse and support recovery.
- Training was delivered through a variety of platforms including e-learning, webinars and blended learning options. With the help of our partners, we adapted more courses to the webinar format. Evaluations have been exceptionally positive.

Priority 4

- Covid restrictions had a significant impact on the functioning of criminal justice system, particularly the Courts where there were significant backlogs. CJSW continued to manage cases with close monitoring.
- Perpetrator groups were suspended, including for domestic abuse and sex offenders to be replaced with one-to-one delivery. Groups were re-established in January 2022 as Covid restrictions eased.
- FVAWP promotes engaging with male perpetrators of domestic abuse to hold them accountable for their behaviours in terms of adult victims, children and third parties a new multi-agency seminar "Engaging Safely with Male Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse" was developed

FVAWP held a development session 9th September 2022 to refresh the action plan, in light of changing circumstances and additional guidance. Emerging themes included:

- Ensuring violence against women and girls and equalities are prioritised within Community Planning with disaggregated data informing decisions and strong Leadership.
- Cost of Living Crisis needs to focus specifically on the impact for women and girls not only families
- Policies need to more effectively gender tested with enhanced use of Equality Impact Assessments
- Ensuring policy drives practice
- Challenges in accessing services especially where there are a range of vulnerabilities

Read more about the work of the FVAWP including the latest [annual report](#).

Outcome 3: Fife's communities (including people from the protected characteristics) have increased confidence to participate in decision making, their human rights respected and have an improved quality of life

Fife Council ESOL Service

Fife Council ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) offers English classes to people living in Fife whose first language is not English. The Service helps learners to improve their English language skills so they can move to further learning, volunteering, a new or different job and to integrate into community life. This is of strategic importance as the Plan for Fife 2017-27 states, "**Opportunities for All** is about ensuring that no-one is left behind.

ESOL teaches English, but classes can also support people with; employability, the driving theory test, the CSCS test, Life in the UK test, access to college, etc and the softer outcomes, such as increased confidence, increased independence, progression to other community-based learning opportunities. Learning takes place in classrooms, online or at established community activities.

Many of the 500 or so learners supported by ESOL annually are refugees. Under VPRS (Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme) Fife welcomed 140 **Syrians** from 2015-2020 and then UKRS (UK Resettlement Scheme) replaced VPRS, and 7 additional individuals have been welcomed since 2020. Afghan families and individuals are being resettled throughout the UK, via Fife and ESOL offers language classes to those with no or little English. Since March 2022 Ukrainians have been able to come to Fife using one of Fife three different routes: (Family VISA, Homes for Ukraine, Scottish Govt Super Sponsorship scheme). There have been approximately 450 arrivals in Fife to date. ESOL has supported a huge number of adults and while many have found employment, they are often under-employed so continue with English lessons, if and when they can, to enable them to get a better job.

The community that ESOL works with faces many barriers. For example, there is no longer a dedicated ESOL Strategy and without a strategic commitment at Government level resulting in an increase in their vulnerability. The No-one Left Behind Strategy is delivered by third sector partners. Learners often fall out with the age-related eligibility, or their needs are misunderstood or overlooked. Under-employment is also an issue. Learners are unaware of progression opportunities or their qualifications are not formal or not recognised, and training opportunities are not available as many are working, though often on zero-hour contracts.

A Test of Change pilot involving staff from the Kirkcaldy Community Development Team, Housing and Social Work started in August 2021. The aim is to work collaboratively to reduce poverty by offering a person-centred approach to improving outcomes for those facing multiple disadvantage. By sharing resources, knowledge and approaches the team aims to intervene early and prevent people from spiralling to statutory services and further hardship.

Inspired by the success of the Participatory City model developed in Barking and Dagenham, Fife Council were invited to explore participation in the project with 5

other Local Authorities in Scotland. 3 staff went down to Barking and Dagenham to further explore the concept. There has been a considerable delay due to the pandemic, but a feasibility study has now commenced in Kirkcaldy. From the initial 6 local authorities identified in Scotland, Fife and Renfrewshire are proceeding with the feasibility phase. The process is being led by The Corra Foundation and findings will be available in January 2022.

Health & Social Care Partnership Participation and Engagement Strategy for Fife 2022-2025

The Strategy's vision is to "Enable the people of Fife to live healthy independent lives by ensuring stake holder views, experiences and ideas are included in the design and delivery of health and social care services that meet the needs and aspirations of the people of Fife".

In relation to equality and diversity, Fife HSCP is committed to the elimination of discrimination and promotion of Equality and Human Rights. This will be embedded into public engagement and participation activities which include:

- Carrying out equality impact assessments;
- Planning engagement activities to ensure they are flexible, accessible, and inclusive;
- Ensuring engagement is appropriate, proportionate, and effective to the participation and engagement activity;
- Employing a variety of innovative methods along with tried and tested methods to ensure maximum participation;
- Working in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure the appropriate people, communities and organisations are involved.

Read more about the [Participation and Engagement Strategy](#) here.

Police Scotland

In Fife there are 16 centres signed up to Third Party Reporting. The majority of the centres are community based groups where they either already have a relationship with a person or the person feels that they could trust the staff because of their role. Examples of this are support services for asylum seekers or refugees, disability day centres, and LGBT support group. Importantly, some of these key partners also form part of the Hate Crime Core Group. On a separate level, the EDI Officer for Fife Division maintains contact with the various centres for any matters arising relating to third party reporting or general EDI enquiries. This is crucial to keep relationships strong and further forge new working relationships through networking.

At present, Third Party Reporting is under review with the Scottish Government. All divisions in Police Scotland fed back areas of good work and areas for improvement and it has been highlighted there is a clear need for third party reporting and there is scope to make this service even better. Due to the ongoing review and

recommendations, signing up new centres is not being overly encouraged at this time until there is better forms of publicising the service to ensure everyone can best support communities. The recommendations proposed to the Scottish Government have the potential to really grow Third Party Reporting and enable it to become a well utilised service throughout Scotland.

The Hate Crime Core group includes lead practitioners from key partners who can influence operational activity and procedures within their organisation; having the direct contact and relationship with those from protected characteristics. The purpose of this group is to address any emerging trends; allowing tactical level decisions to be made by the group on intervention, prevention and assess the wider impact on our communities. The ongoing commitment of the Hate Crime Core group is crucial to support communities with the ever evolving pace of equality, diversity and inclusion.

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Outcome 4: The Council understands its workforce better and it reflects the diversity of the local population

Employee information

The Council meets the specific duties in relation to the publishing of information about the workforce and pay practices within Equality in Employment Reports (available on fife.gov.uk). These reports provide employee information across all the protected characteristics including recruitment, training, and reasons for leaving the organisation. The appendix of these reports also provides information about the gender pay gap and occupational segregation.

Key statistics - profile of the workforce as of 31st March 2022

Age

Employees aged 55 and over make up 29.4% of our total workforce. The percentage of our workforce aged 24 and under has slightly decreased from the last reporting period (5.3% in 2020 to 4.2% 2022). However, the age group 24-29 has increased in the same time period (7.4% in 2020 to 8.1% 2022) so this could be an indication we have been successful in retaining our employees who were recruited whilst aged 16-24 and have since aged out of that bracket.

Gender

The gender split has remained relatively static with females making up 72.9% of our workforce (72.2% in 2020).

Disability

The percentage of our workforce declaring a disability remains below 2%. In the move to a new HR/payroll system we had difficulties migrating data about employees' disability status as this is recorded differently from the previous HR/payroll system. Encouraging disclosure (including the option for "prefer not to say") is a priority action for 2021-25 and we hope to show progress in our next update.

Ethnicity

Just under 1% of our workforce have told us that they are from a non-white background. Ethnicity has a higher percentage of people choosing the option "prefer not to say" than all other protected characteristics (22.4%) so although we have only 5.6% "blanks"/non-disclosure of this question we are still unsure of how accurate our ethnicity demographic information is. We will make efforts to explore why our employees are choosing not to disclose their ethnicity and what we can do to allay any fears or misconceptions around providing us with this data.

Gender Pay Gap

	31/03/2021	31/03/2022
Women's avg hourly earning	£16.15	£16.37
Men's avg hourly earnings	£16.52	£16.63
Gender Pay Gap	2.24%	1.56%

The gender pay gap has decreased from 2021 to 2022. This is likely due to the Fife Council Living Wage (FCLW) grade being female-dominated and this grade received a proportionately higher pay increase during this time period than all other grades. The FCLW rate increased higher as a result of the Council being a living wage employer and as such pay more than the nationally agreed Scottish Local Government living wage (£10.90 as opposed to £10.85).

Employment-related equality outcome and workforce actions

The employment-related equality outcome for 2021-2025 is: *"The Council understands its workforce better and it reflects the diversity of the local population"*. We set key workforce actions to achieve this. This is our progress so far:

Work to improve the information we hold about employee's equality information.

We have moved to a new HR/payroll system since the last reporting period. The new system now links data recorded at recruitment with our core HR data. Over time this will help improve our disclosure rates as we know people are more likely to complete equality monitoring questions at the recruitment stage.

Unfortunately, however, during implementation of the new system we were unable to migrate all of our data and therefore some disclosure rates are temporarily lower than they were in previous reports. We are planning a comms campaign to encourage employees to check that their information has been recorded and if not to complete it once more.

We now ask for and record information on our employees' caring responsibilities.

Engage with local communities about our workplace practices in partnership with Fife Centre for Equalities.

We have been working with Fife Centre for Equalities (FCE) to undertake research into the public's perception of Fife Council as an employer and access to the job opportunities we offer. This piece of work was specifically targeted at minority ethnic communities within Fife as our data from the last reporting period showed we had a disproportionately low number of applications from these groups. FCE ran a survey from August to November 2022 with follow up focus groups and interviews. When the analysis of the project is finalised, we will use this information to create an action plan and will provide a further update in our next report.

Engage with young people in our workforce to identify and act on ways to attract and support other young people (aged 16 - 24) into training and employment opportunities with the Council.

“YEN”, our Young Employee Network, has re-launched. Senior managers have been attending the meetings to talk through their career paths with the group. We are looking at other ways to support engagement within the network including the use of Yammer.

The Kickstart Government scheme allowed us to offer 6-month work placements to young people aged 16-24 years old who were on universal credit. The placements included wrap around employability support and gave those young people, who were more likely to have been disproportionately hit by the pandemic, the opportunity to build their skills in the workplace and to gain experience to improve their chances of finding long term employment.

Within Fife Council 51 placements were recruited to across Services such as Waste Operations, Active Schools, Customer Service, Home Care, Housing, Communities and Supported Employment Service. Following conclusion of the programme, 23 of those who had placements gained employment with the Council.

Demonstrate our commitment to equality of opportunity for trans people throughout recruitment and employment, including supporting trans employees through a transitioning process.

Guidance pages on supporting transgender employees were created on our employee intranet in April 2022. Transgender Fife, the Senior Equalities Group and the Trade Unions provided feedback on the content before it was agreed and published.

Further our support to recruit and retain disabled employees.

The Workplace Adjustment passport launched in November 2021. This provides a systematic method of discussing, recording, and reviewing reasonable adjustments. Use of the passport is voluntary and it is up to each individual to decide if making use of the passport will help to support them at work, but we do encourage the use of it.

We renewed our disability confident employer status in December 2022.

Review employee training relating to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Our Chief Executive Team agreed in June 2022 that equalities training should be mandatory. We reviewed the available eLearning modules and have been working with the Digital Skills and Learning team to create accompanying training resources and alternative formats so that the training can be delivered to all employee groups.

Develop new workstyles to provide support for more flexible and inclusive working across the Council.

We have a varied workforce, with day-to-day activities of council employees looking very different. We have mapped every job to one of six categories with a package of tools and support relevant to the job role. There is a project group in place who are developing our workstyles and exploring what's possible and fair for everyone in terms of flexibility, choice, access to technology and wellbeing.

Following the pandemic, we have successfully rolled out our new “blended workstyle” (often referred to elsewhere as “hybrid”). A survey was issued in December 2022 to gather information from employees whose posts were identified as being eligible for blended working. This closed in January 2023 with 1120 responses (around 47% of those eligible for this workstyle). Only 4% of respondents had opted out of adopting the new workstyle and 84% felt the balance of home and office working is right.

We are continuing to work with Flexibility Works to progress thinking on flexibilities across all employee groups. The focus in 2023 will be on testing a range of good practice for increasing flexibility within our frontline roles. Corporately we are also reviewing our Flexible Working Policy.

Other equality-related projects

British Sign Language progress

Since the last reporting period we have made efforts to increase the provision of BSL translation as standard. The Council’s weekly employee news round-up is now translated each week and we are working with the Council’s Deaf Communication Service to translate other key HR information.

Equally Safe at Work

The Council is currently taking part in the [Equally Safe at Work](#) employer accreditation programme which is run by Close the Gap to support the Scottish Government’s Equally Safe strategy preventing violence against women and girls. This is an equality action under the outcome “Women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse – and the attitudes that help perpetuate it”. A cross-departmental working group is in place and a detailed action plan has been developed and is progressing.

Community Wealth Building

The Council has committed to actions designed to advance Community Wealth Building to achieve access for individuals to local and fair employment opportunities, fairer wages, skills development opportunities and improved wellbeing for our employees. These include:

- Redesigned recruitment approaches to help applicants overcome digital and process barriers
- Targeted recruitment from priority groups who face inequalities and who are furthest from the labour market
- Establishment of a ‘life chances’ approach to a proportion of core Fife Council vacancies
- Employability programmes to be designed into recruitment processes for identified posts with guaranteed job outcomes for participants

Workforce Youth Investment

Our Workforce Youth Investment Programme continues, each year providing apprenticeships, traineeships and graduate roles to people aged 16-24 residing in Fife. Support and empowerment of young employees and the wider young people of Fife will continue to be a priority. We have signed up to the Young Person's Guarantee.

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Outcome 5: Raising educational achievement and attainment particularly for those in their early years or in early learning and childcare

In relation to the outcome and actions for Education and Children's Services, the following update is available:

- Professional Learning regarding Equalities undertaken by all Headteachers via HTE days.
- New Equalities website ready for launch in May 23, this will support strategic planning and professional learning for all practitioners
- New PowerBi report supporting schools with anti-bullying data to mitigate any discrimination against learners with protected characteristics
- New Equalities guidance devised for schools to support policy development.
- Worked in partnership with Fife Centre for Equalities to devise a day of training for Senior Leaders focused on specific protected characteristics and devising a school equalities action plan (June 23)

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4. Mainstreaming Equalities

Although the equality and diversity document sets out five specific equality outcomes, there is nevertheless some work being undertaken across the Council which has an equality focus and is worth noting. This section presents some of that work.

Neurodevelopment Pathway

A Multi-agency Strategic Oversight Group with a focus initially on Autism was established in 2021. Representation on the group included Education & Children's Services, Health and Social Care and NHS with links to other stakeholders. An Action Plan was developed on work related to Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) which enabled a clear focus on key areas to be developed, discussed and improved. The action plan areas of good practice and common areas for development as well as gaps. The oversight group identified that when services communicate and work together, with a multi-agency response there are better outcomes for service users and that experiences are varied depending on the staff who interact with the children, young people, adults, or families.

Whilst this work was underway, the Scottish Government introduced the Neurodevelopment Pathways and Test of Change (ToC). Some of the aims of this particular ToC were to:

- Provide timely, proactive mental health support to autistic people and their families/carers;
- Enable autistic people to develop and implement strategies for self-management;
- Improve collaboration between mental health professionals and services and autism specific supports.

Read more about the test of change [neurodevelopment pathway](#) work here.

Community Engagement Toolkit

Community engagement is a priority for the Council and is vital in meeting the Plan for Fife outcomes. A [toolkit](#) has been developed to support services and organisations to deliver effective community engagement through following nine key stages when planning an engagement or consultation.

The principles of engagement were used in the Recovery and Renewal [Plan for Fife Update 2021-2024](#) which set out four recovery and renewal priorities following the pandemic – community wealth building; leading economic recovery; tackling poverty & preventing crisis; addressing the climate emergency. The following are some of the issues which will contribute to effective community engagement and inclusion are:

- Taking a community wealth building approach improves communities and their wellbeing as it puts communities at the heart of all decisions and prevents problems in the future.
- Helping people maximise income and remove cost barriers to participation.
- Improve community voice structures through the Community Learning & Development Plan.
- People consider services are more joined up.
- More people involved in local community planning and locality planning.
- More community-based models of social provision.

Gaelic Language Plan

Fife is increasingly proud of its Gaelic heritage and is working with communities using Gaelic as a tool for personal, social and economic growth, as well as just enjoying it for the craic!

The most recent [Gaelic-plan.pdf \(fife.gov.uk\)](#) promoted the Gaelic toolkit for tourism [Gaelic for Tourism - Fife Tourism Partnership](#) as part of Seachdain na Gàidhlig / World Gaelic Week in February, as well as launching the Youtube and Instagram platforms.

From February 2023, adult classes have been held in Levenmouth and Beath High Community Use, with a third class starting at Queen Margarets in the near future. Community based classes are also proposed in Glenrothes and Dunfermline. Bookbugs at Carnegie Library continue to be well attended and Gaelic and Scots inclusion at Lochgelly Library will start in May.

Ionnadan na Gàidhlig/ Gaelic hubs are being developed in Dunfermline, St Andrews and Cupar; these are places where there have been multiple points of Gaelic engagement working in partnership to increase Gaelic use in the community and use Gaelic as a tool for change.

The Gaelic walks with Fife Cultural Trust have reached an international audience and a University of Virginia trip to Scotland has specifically asked for a Gaelic walk and placenames input while in St Andrews.

5. Fife Centre for Equalities

Fife Centre for Equalities continues to provide support to officers, facilitation and linkage with community groups for engagement activity across all the Equality Outcomes. Some achievements in relation to the four equality outcomes are as follows:

Outcome 1

Over the past year, residents have been supported to provide feedback on the Local Transport Strategy (LTS), and more recently the Local Development Plan. The LTS process started engagement with early face-to-face discussions on the Council's vision which helped refine the online survey. The survey in turn was widely promoted via online forums, social media and networks and users were supported to respond where required, leading to a good take up (1335 total responses, of which 180 said they have a disability and 33 were from an ethnic minority background). Along with the online format, FCE facilitated an in-person equality impact assessment workshop, helping simplify and make more accessible the questions being asked, involving 20 participants from varied protected characteristics groups (including disability, people with socio-economic disadvantage, carers).

FCE is also providing support for the BSL Plan by hosting and promoting Deaf Support Service BSL videos for Fife Council Reception Staff through FCE's media website and YouTube channel.

Outcome 2

FCE promoted the 16 Days of Activism Campaign with community groups who were directly involved in the Fife Violence Against Women Partnership such as Fife Equalities Forum.

Outcome 3

FCE continues to support participation in consultations, using the approach taken in the LTS consultation and strategy, and is now focussing on involving disabled people in the Local Development Plan consultation.

Outcome 4

FCE carried out a survey and in-depth interviews with would-be employees and former staff from Fife Council. The report and analysis summarise the findings from 70 respondents and 5 interviewees. The key barriers highlighted in the report were: the requirement of a supporting statement for entry-level posts, accessibility and inclusion in communication, accessibility of web page for people applying from mobile devices and transport amongst wider findings and insights.

Outcome 5

FCE is providing equality diversity and inclusion training and workshops to the Education Extended Leadership team, which was disrupted due to strikes in 2022-2023, but resuming in the 2023-2024.