

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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1. Introduction and statement of intent

We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion. Our work actively promotes human rights and the core principles such as dignity, fairness, equality, respect and autonomy.

Our [Strategic Plan for 2020-2023](#) identifies our priorities for the next three years. The plan also sets out the organisational characteristics and values that support us to embed a culture of equality and diversity across the SSSC.

Our legal duties in relation to equality are set out in various pieces of legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001. See the appendix for further information.

We:

- are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in our varied roles which include being a public body, regulator and an employer
- recognise and value the benefits a diverse workforce brings to our work
- treat everyone fairly and with respect – this includes registrants, staff, applicants and all other key stakeholders
- will go beyond minimum statutory duties when considering and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion for people with characteristics not protected by law
- are supporting initiatives to increase the diversity of our workforce and the social service workforce in Scotland.

This policy sets out our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. It also details our respective roles and responsibilities. This policy will be revised every three years or more frequently if required and in consultation with the Partnership Forum. We will publish a report annually to show details of our progress in this area.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, secondees, agency staff and anyone else working on behalf of the SSSC. Our staff must follow this policy in addition to any requirements set by relevant regulatory or professional bodies.

Many of our stakeholders will be required to follow separate policies and procedures. In these instances, we expect people who undertake work on our behalf to follow the spirit of this policy. For example, we must consider equality throughout our tender processes and comply with relevant legislation as set out in our Procurement Strategy.

This policy generally excludes the social service workforce as they are required to follow their employer's policies. We take several steps to promote equality in the wider workforce by:

- embedding standards that promote equality and diversity in the Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers
- gathering relevant protected characteristics to gain insight and promote equality, diversity and inclusion in the work we do
- promoting social service careers to underrepresented groups
- developing and publishing official and national statistics on the social service workforce including data on age, gender, ethnicity and disability.

Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following protected characteristics:

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

The Act makes it illegal to discriminate against, harass or victimise another person because they have any of the protected characteristics. The Act also provides protection against discrimination where someone is perceived to have one of the protected characteristics or is associated with someone who has a protected characteristic.

The Equality Act 2010 also established the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The appendix contains further information on our statutory duties. Our approach to meeting the equality duty also sits alongside the Scottish Government's [Fair Work Framework](#), which sets out the belief that fair work is work that offers effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect.

2. Principles

We will deliver services which promote equality, diversity and inclusion. We aim for our workforce to be representative of our society and stakeholders, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best. We contribute to the same objectives for the wider social service workforce. For example, equality and diversity is a prominent feature throughout Scottish Vocational Qualifications and the National Occupational Standards.

We will do this by:

- using tools such as Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) to promote equality in our work. An EIA should be developed for relevant policies and projects unless there is a clear reason for not doing so
- being inclusive and involving key stakeholders throughout our work in line with our Involving People plan
- being transparent by publishing our mainstreaming report, equality outcomes and EIAs
- connecting our equality mainstreaming with related activities such as corporate parenting and children's rights
- providing appropriate training
- using the equalities data we hold to assess impacts and improve services.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Council

The Council is responsible for:

- taking forward the strategic aims and objectives as agreed by the Scottish Ministers
- reviewing and approving our equality outcomes and mainstreaming reports and our Equality, Diversity and inclusion Policy
- Council members work to the six core principles of [the Good Governance Standard for Public Services](#).

3.2 Executive Management Team

The Executive Management Team (EMT) is responsible for:

- being Equality and Diversity champions and ensuring Directorates undertake the requirements set out in this policy
- considering our policies, processes and procedures and agreeing modifications as appropriate.

3.3 Operational Management Team

The Operational Management Team (OMT) oversee the day to day operational management of the SSSC. They are responsible for:

- ensuring their teams undertake the requirements set out in this policy
- ensuring appropriate departmental representation on the Equality Working Group.

3.4 Staff

All staff:

- must be aware of and comply with this policy and our statutory obligations
- are expected to participate in training (which the SSSC will provide) which supports the implementation of this policy, as appropriate
- should consider how we can promote and model equality within our role
- should consider and develop Equality Impact Assessments as relevant.

4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group (the Group) is chaired by a member of the EMT and consists of staff from across the SSSC, including OMT or line managers from every department. The Group has a key role to play in promoting equality across the SSSC. We will provide training to support the group. Its key purpose is to:

- support the mainstreaming of equalities within SSSC
- provide evidence which contributes towards our equality outcomes.

The Group has additional roles including:

- promoting and mainstreaming good practice by promoting a culture that supports equality, diversity and inclusion
- assessing the impact of applying a new or revised policy or practice against the needs of the general equality duty
- supporting the development and implementation of our mainstreaming and equality outcomes
- leading the development of staff guidance and training
- assisting the SSSC to meet its responsibilities in relation to legislation
- being a source of advice on the development of Equality Impact Assessments and to track actions
- contributing to consultations
- consider the practical implementation of our legal responsibilities of Corporate Parenting and the involvement of young people and staff in this area.

5. Monitoring

We will develop equality Key Performance Indicators and report on them. We will develop and report on progress on our equality outcomes.

6. Staff conduct

The SSSC takes seriously any instances of anyone failing to follow this policy. For example, this could include bullying, harassment or any behaviour which is generally inconsistent with the policy. Such behaviour may be investigated in line with our disciplinary procedure.

Employees can make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of alleged discrimination.

7. Link with wider policies

Staff should consider this policy alongside relevant policies and procedures such as the Code of Conduct, Grievance Procedure, Dignity at Work and Whistleblowing Policy.

Appendix: Statutory duties

The Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty

As a public body, the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) complies with the Equality Act 2010 and the General Duty. Our legal duties in relation to equality are set out in various pieces of legislation and regulations:

- the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001
- the Equality Act 2010
- the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, as amended.

The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 requires the SSSC to act in a manner which encourages equal opportunities. Our responsibilities on equality issues were expanded by the Equality Act 2010 including the public sector equality duty detailed in section 149 of the Act.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The PSED was created by the Equality Act 2010. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Specific duties

The specific equality duties came in force in 2012. They require us to undertake a range of functions such as produce a report on how we are mainstreaming the equality duty. We are also required to publish gender gap information and statements on equal pay.

The 2012 regulations were amended by the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2016. We are required to gather information on the relevant protected characteristics of members of our Council.



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We promote equality by removing unlawful and unfair treatment on the grounds of any protected characteristic wherever possible.

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