



# People Service

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## People Strategy

**2022 - 2027**

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# Introduction

The People Strategy has been developed with the Council's Ambitious, Sustainable and Connected aims in mind and which are reflected throughout the document to support our corporate objectives. An effective people strategy can help support the overall business goals by improving employee performance. Most importantly, it places employees at the forefront of the organisation's vision, which can have long-lasting positive effects.

There is a need to adapt our strategic thinking so we can design better services for the future based on clear fundamentals:

- who it is we deliver services to and why?
- how will our people deliver services?
- how will we succeed and measure success?

Our strategy needs to focus on developing our people. We need to be ambitious for our staff. Treat them as individuals and show them that being fulfilled, safe and healthy in the workplace are not the outcomes from success, they are the ingredients for success. To successfully implement the strategy our leaders, need to instil confidence, and use their knowledge, skills and abilities to shape the future of the organisation. We need to give our people the skills to accept uncertainty and develop confidence to embrace the inevitable changes that lie ahead and operate in a safe and healthy way. The expectation is that our staff will take responsibility and be accountable for the work they are employed to do.

## People Strategy

### Context

The [Corporate Workforce Planning Strategy](#) approved in 2017 recognises that our most important resource is our people. We are one of the largest employers in the Highlands delivering services to a population of 235,430 by 10,500 staff (8,300 FTE). The overall revenue budget is £660.237m of which £378.688m relates to staffing costs.



The Corporate Workforce Planning Strategy (2017-22) is underpinned by the following key principles:

- be an employer of choice
- a workforce aligned to Financial Strategy
- supporting the change agenda
- partnership working
- positive equalities and wellbeing culture
- attract, develop and retain talent
- skilled and valued staff aligned to key service outcomes
- transition and retraining as opportunities and alternatives to redundancy
- a flexible workforce with agile roles
- empowered employees at all grades
- create capacity for managers to manage.

The Workforce Planning Strategy supported the need to shape our workforce in an incremental manner.

Following the pandemic, the pace of change has picked up significantly. The pandemic has also altered our context of work: we now operate in a more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous work environment with a challenging financial outlook. We will work with partners to overcome workforce challenges collaboratively where possible. The pulling of resources, creativity along with a more flexible and agile workforce will be key to our success going forward.

## Fair Work

The Fair Work Convention was established in 2015 with a remit to drive forward fair work in Scotland. Their vision is that by 2025 people in Scotland will have a world-leading working life where fair work drives success, wellbeing and prosperity for individuals, businesses, organisations and society.

Fair work is defined as work that offers an effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect. It balances the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers and it can generate benefits for individuals, organisations and society.

We continue to strive to be a fair employer, achieving Living Wage Employer status in 2019. We are a Disability Confident Employer currently working towards achieving Disability Confident Leader status. We were awarded the Armed Forces Covenant Gold level in 2021. In addition, the Reasonable Adjustment Passport scheme was introduced in 2022.

The Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices, 2017 refers to 'good work' as 'shaped by working practice that benefits employees through good reward schemes and terms and conditions, having a secure position, better training and development, good communication and ways of working that support task discretion and involve employees in securing business improvements.' This mirrors key principles in our Corporate Workforce Planning Strategy. The Working Lives Scotland Report by CIPD indicates the composition of 'good work' continues to be relevant post pandemic. We will build on our achievements which contribute to fair work practices and 'good work' as shown in this strategy. The themes outlined in this strategy contribute to developing a strong sense of corporate identity and culture our people not only recognise, but can identify with and are attracted to, as key for any successful organisation.

Many of the important dimensions of fair work can be seen in organisations where unions are recognised. Our longstanding Health and Safety and HR partnership agreements demonstrate the value we place on the contribution our trade union colleagues provide to strategic and operational issues. Working in partnership with our trade union colleagues will remain a key aspect of the People Strategy.

## Key Elements of the Strategy



It is well documented that our staff stepped up during the pandemic to continue to deliver services, including the delivery of new services to our communities and the vulnerable. Many staff took on different roles, adapting and creating different service delivery models and connecting with our partners to continue to support our communities. As we move on from recovery and transition to a post pandemic workplace, we need to reshape the organisation aligned to new priorities. Our people will drive forward our corporate priorities with the People Strategy being a central and critical component closely aligned to the financial strategy. The following elements of the strategy will support the organisation's transition and create a modern workforce to deliver the reprioritised services for the future.

Change is not a project, it is constant. The pandemic has accelerated opportunities and as leaders we need to ensure our strategies align and support the change needed from staff in order to effect change in the organisation.



The key fundamental elements of the strategy are:

- **staff engagement**
- **health, safety and wellbeing**
- **reward and conditions (including job design)**
- **talent management**
- **people development**
- **people data and processes**
- **workforce planning**
- **equality, diversity and inclusion.**

## Staff Engagement

Giving our people a sense of belonging and being able to identify with a strong organisational culture is key to engagement in the post pandemic environment we operate in. During 2020/21 several surveys, engagement sessions and transformation workshops reaffirmed that our people are committed to our vision to be Ambitious, Sustainable and Connected and that there is a real appetite to support the organisation to achieve our priorities.

An Engagement Strategy will be developed with the overall aim to motivate, engage and empower the Council's workforce to achieve a working environment based on our values to improve motivation, ways of working and individual capability at all levels. This engagement strategy will cultivate creativity and innovation and establish a place in which employees are proud to work and positively contribute to the sustainability of the organisation and have a sense of connection to the organisation. An all staff satisfaction survey is one aspect of the engagement strategy. We recognise that the views and suggestions of our staff are key to informing the future delivery of Council services. Therefore, we want to develop an environment where we listen and seek to understand how, through connected communication we can improve motivation to deliver dynamic ways of working and increasing individual capability at all levels.

We will:

- optimise employee engagement levels across the Council
- equip line managers and senior managers with the skills to successfully engage their workforce, particularly during times of change
- set out a consistent framework for delivering employee engagement across the Council.



The staff satisfaction survey will establish an engagement index and data from the survey will be used to inform policy, guidance and further support for our workforce. An Engagement Action Plan will be introduced with indicators to measure success and timescales with links to related policies and strategies.

## Health, Safety and Wellbeing

We will advance our employee health and wellbeing by ensuring there is a safe and secure working environment for our staff and legal compliance in all staffing matters. Ensuring we meet our statutory obligations in respect of the health, safety and welfare at work of our employees and all others affected by our activities must be bedded into everything we do. Compliance with health and safety legislation/regulations will be considered the minimum standard to be met. Our aim is to seek a culture of continuous improvement in health, safety and wellbeing which is supported by

- developing policies, procedures and standards
- monitoring and inspecting workplaces and investigating accidents, incidents and occupational ill-health
- providing health and safety training
- promoting occupational health
- providing confidential employee support.

The Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing (OHSW) Policy was approved at the Central Safety Committee on 7 October 2022 and outlines the roles and responsibilities for health and safety in the organisation including the role of our trade union partners.

An OHSW Strategy is also being developed. Both an employee wellbeing survey and an organisational stress survey will be rolled out and the emerging data used to inform and updated the Employee Wellbeing Strategy.

## Mental Health

Supporting and promoting good mental health and wellbeing is one of the core outcomes and priorities of our Council. It is key to ensuring people are supported and able to live healthy lives. The impact of COVID has led to increased levels of social isolation and loneliness and some deterioration in mental health and wellbeing. Mental health is the most frequent reason for referral to our occupational health provider with 39% of referrals during the period April - June 2022.

We will continue to expand our network of Mental Health Representatives to provide ongoing support to staff. A range of advice and guidance for staff is available on the [Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing](#) team site.

## **Trauma Informed Workforce**

The Council has committed to rolling out a trauma informed practice in all services and to promote specialist training for our staff. In developing a trauma informed workforce, we aim to ensure we deliver services in ways which prevent further harm or re-traumatisation for those who have experienced psychological trauma or adversity at any stage in their lives. While workforce training is a key part of becoming a trauma-informed service/organisation, training by itself is not sufficient. Evidence indicates there are four key drivers that are required to embed trauma-informed practice and policy in a meaningful and sustained way:

- leadership that commits to embodying trauma-informed principles and driving forward this culture change in a joined-up, collaborative way
- workforce wellbeing is prioritised and there are structures in place for monitoring and maintaining staff wellbeing, including supervision
- people with lived experience of trauma are involved in continuous feedback and service improvement
- data and information is collected to support routine evaluation of the impact of this work on meaningful outcomes.

## **Cost of Living Pressures**

It is well documented that due to the cost of living pressures the impact on staff wellbeing is likely to be significant. Support with Financial Wellbeing can be accessed through the Council's Welfare team and the Employee Assistance Programme. Information on financial wellbeing can also be accessed on the [staff intranet](#) site.

## **Attendance Support**

Supporting staff who are off sick or have a long-term condition will also form a strand of the wellbeing approach to promote high staff attendances. It is well reported absence can also adversely impact on colleagues and team performance. The effectiveness of attendance support will be monitored through data provided regularly to service management teams. We are also relaunching on-line training and support for managers to deal with short term persistent staff absence and long-term absences. This will be in form of short refresher training and videos/vimeos. Guidance on ill health retirement is being reviewed and managers will be upskilled on the ill health retirement process.

## Reward and Conditions (incl. Job Design)

Working practices that benefit employees through good reward schemes and terms and conditions is highlighted in the Taylor Review as one of the components of good work. The [Working Lives Scotland 2022](#) report, which presents the findings from a CIPD employer survey reports that a third of employees cite changing jobs due to better pay/benefits. It is important we provide staff with meaningful work aligned to service objectives and a robust pay structure which is transparent and equal pay compliant. The Staff Satisfaction Survey will be used to assess the effectiveness of our staff pay and benefits provision. We are an accredited Living Wage Employer and in a final stage to fully consolidate the Scottish Living Wage rate in our current grading structure.

Job profiles will be designed based on core skills and competences to enable our staff to move easily within teams and across services to best meet Service delivery demands. Job roles will offer meaningful work, evaluated through the Council's Job Evaluation Scheme. Jobs roles will be adapted for employees with a disability to ensure full compliance with legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and the Council's Reasonable Adjustment Passport Scheme introduced in 2022. Job design or redesign of roles must reflect the changing needs of the business and offer greater flexibility for sustainability of the organisation going forward.

## Hybrid Working

The Council recognises the benefits of a more flexible approach to work with hybrid working being widely considered for office-based staff across the Council. The premise of hybrid working is based on business needs and services delivery requirements to ensure organisational performance is not compromised.

The hybrid model allows staff to resume valuable in-person time, to collaborate, learn and work together in an office environment, whilst also retaining the flexibility to undertake work from home or remotely as work outputs dictate.

Our workforce vision is to have a motivated and committed workforce that is agile, focused on outcomes and dedicated to continuous improvement. By modernising our working practices, we will be able to:

- provide an environment for staff that improves productivity, work-life balance and job satisfaction and retention
- improve service delivery for our customers
- realise financial savings on buildings and maximise space utilisation
- lower our carbon footprint

- increase the diversity and inclusivity of our workplace, thereby enhancing our prospective talent pool.

We are also embarking on Smarter Working which involves more widely modernising approaches to work, and includes the improved use of technology, making buildings fit for purpose, increasing cross-service working, reviewing job roles and the structures of teams, and seeking new and innovative ways to engage with the Highland Community.

## Talent Management

The Talent Management Strategy will provide the foundation to build an 'ambitious, sustainable and connected' culture within the organisation.

It recognises that our people are our most valuable asset both in terms of physical and financial resource. Maintaining a strong focus on attraction and retention whilst also identifying opportunities for our employees to grow and develop the necessary skills to meet both present and future needs.

Evolving business demands has set a new precedence for management and we must invest in the employee experience, for the entire employee life cycle. Investing in our people will demonstrate our commitment to developing a high performing, diverse and agile workforce. We are looking for staff with a learning attitude who embrace change and will develop and grow their ability and ambition while feeling valued for their contribution.

We must develop key enablers to embed our Talent Management Strategy being progressed which includes the provision of key housing for critical staff roles in areas where housing has been identified as a barrier to recruitment. Other key enablers involve strengthening our cross-service working and building upon collaborative opportunities with partner organisations. Furthermore, improving and increasing our engagement with local communities and education establishments will be key to engaging younger talent and we must enhance the marketing of our job and career opportunities, raising the profile of the Council with the ambition of being considered an employer of choice in the Highlands.

We have demonstrated our ability to implement alternative service delivery models, and we must continue to strive for excellence with a defined corporate Council approach to Talent Management to meet both organisational and Service needs. We will harness our progress and multi-skill our employees to future-proof our organisation as we move forward. Our workplace aim is to be high performing and foster positive staff attitude

and behaviour through career opportunities and genuine commitment to employee wellbeing that will in turn increase staff loyalty and motivation.

## People Development

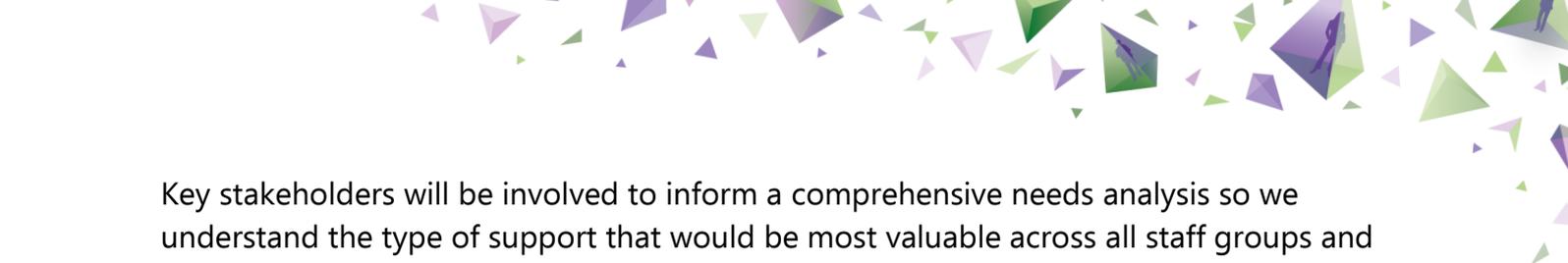
### People Development Plan

The renaming of Learning & Development to People Development (PD) is to highlight the required move from delivery of training by an organisation to the future role of facilitating development of our people, based on the needs of the organisation. To achieve the Council's vision, and to meet the needs of busy staff we will provide a blended approach to learning with a move towards more learning interventions being delivered through digital solutions, while continuing with face-to-face interventions (diagram 1 below).



This change meets the needs of busy staff by providing learning opportunities at the best time and place, maximises the impact of learning through experience, people, and formal training methods, and will enable us to create and support high-performing workforces in a cost sustainable manner. All levels of staff will be encouraged to cascade and share knowledge and skills with others across their teams.

The People Development Strategy will create a framework that details vision, objectives, primary learning needs, employee groups, core delivery methods, measurement, and governance to ensure that the PD function has a clearly articulated purpose and roadmap. We will continue to deliver and increase our range of Scottish Vocational Qualifications and other awards for NHS staff through our Service, for Modern and Graduate Apprentices as a Skills Development Scotland training provider and offer places to appropriate external partners.



Key stakeholders will be involved to inform a comprehensive needs analysis so we understand the type of support that would be most valuable across all staff groups and teams, including continuous professional development. We will adopt an evidence-based approach to designing interventions that identify gaps and upskill employees. Our priority is to build a highly talented, flexible and competent workforce who enable the achievement of organisational objectives, job requirements and individual work goals. We will achieve this through:

## **Elected Members, Leadership and Management Development**

We will work with Elected members to identify development opportunities and signpost to specialist interventions to support them in their roles.

Senior Leadership program and opportunities will be designed and delivered to develop the effectiveness of our leaders.

Blended Management Development and mentoring programs will develop skills, identify best practice, and advise on what is expected from our managers.

The development of coaching skills will be actively promoted amongst all managers as a way of effectively supporting team members and developing a more effective work force for the future.

## **Management and Staff Induction**

A clear induction process with supporting documentation which outlines organisational objectives, team and job outcomes, and includes mandatory learning will be designed. This will provide a positive introduction for new employees and those moving jobs within the organisation, and safeguards employees and the organisation from harm, including breach of data and H&S legislation and best practice.

## **Digital Learning**

As we move to more learning being available through digital interventions, our key priority is to make efficient use of Traineasy, our e-learning platform. This will include increasing the number of courses available, provide signposts to learning that are linked to Employee Review and Development (ERD), making use of reporting functionality appropriately. We will work in collaboration with the platform provider, Payroll/HR System and ICT specialists to implement required technical changes. We will build on existing networks with specialists where required to inform content, which will result in tangible outcomes aligned to organisational values, competencies and behaviours.

Accessibility is a central consideration in all provision and further analysis is required to identify requirements and difficulties with remote and systems access. We will address individual learning preferences and needs and promote opportunities for pre-recorded and real time options such as Q&A, screen sharing sessions.

There is a clear focus on improving and developing digital skills for our staff to meet future requirements of the organisation aligned to efficiency and performance agenda. We will maximise the impact of learning through a range of experience, people and formal training methods, to enable us to create and support high-performing workforces in a cost sustainable manner. All levels of staff will be encouraged to cascade and share knowledge and skills with others across their teams. Overall, our priority is to build a highly talented, flexible and competent workforce who enable the achievement of organisational objectives, job requirements and individual work goals.

## People Data and Processes

The effective support, management, and wellbeing of the people we employ relies on effective decision making, understanding the attributes and characteristics of those people and evidenced based plans for their future deployment. This in turn requires a systematic approach to the management of extremely large quantities of data.

It is against the requirements that the current systems need to be significantly strengthened as currently users of the systems (with justification):

- feel frustrated and fatigued
- lack faith that the data produced is right & think it is slow to arrive
- believe the system creates inefficiencies instead of adding value
- believe systems are of less value for strategic planning than they should be
- do not support standard operating procedures or adoption of business rules
- are not joined up, have elements that are unpredictable & poorly controlled.

## People and Finance System Programme (P&FS)

The desired position is one where there is confidence that managers and staff will receive accurate data on time with minimum effort and the council will operate systems that are efficient, effective, and meet need. To get to that position the People and Finance Systems Programme (P&FS) has been instigated. This is made up of the following projects:

- migration to a cloud-based system and new functionality

- a data cleanse, restructure, and maintenance project
- People and Role Team design
- a whole systems approach to data support to the employee life cycle
- ERP Procurement.

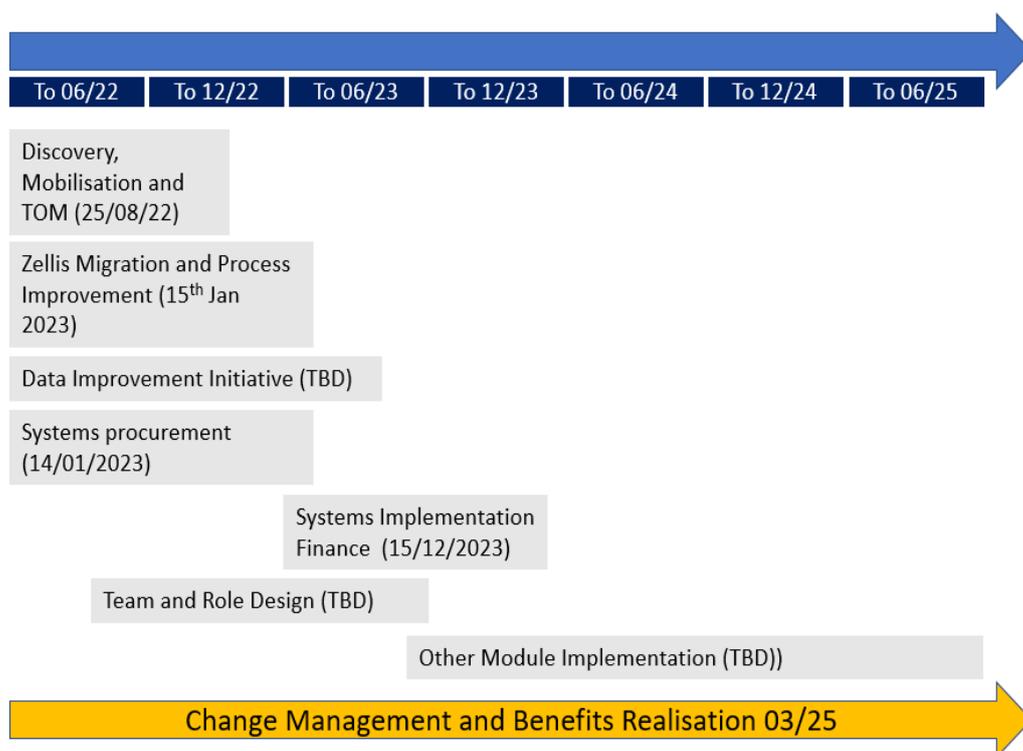
From an organisational point of view the aim is “To create a step change in system capability for the service and the council as a whole”. This will mean:

- a rationalisation and simplifications of standards
- creating “one version of the truth” through effectively managing the data
- ensuring clear support roles and teams aligned to the needs of the business
- rationalised IT systems
- performance managed Systems.

## Target Operating Model

The help achieve that step change the end state has been described as a Target Operating Model. This sets out the ambition for the programme along with the benefits being sought, ensures stakeholders and initiatives are connected and seeks to ensure what is delivered is designed to be fit for purpose, sustainable and resilient.

The timelines for the programme as they stand now are shown in Diagram 2 below.



## Workforce Planning

The [Corporate Workforce Planning Strategy](#) was reviewed in 2020 by the Redesign Board which determined the strategy continues to be fit for purpose with key recommendations taken forward in our recruitment approach and talent management strategy such as:

- invigorating and relaunching an induction process
- simplifying the Employee Review and Development (ERD) process to remove barriers to ERD taking place
- investigating benefits of joint workforce planning (WFP) with partner agencies
- introducing a process for secondments opportunities to be aligned to development needs, career paths and succession planning.

The Corporate Workforce Planning Strategy will be updated to cover the next 5 years with one of the key themes being 'grow your own' by investing in our current workforce. We will also create opportunities to retain our young workforce in the Highlands and address the historic age demographics in the Council. We will continue to promote Modern Apprentice, Graduate Apprentice and Youth Trainee opportunities and utilise external funding for this. Modern and graduate apprenticeships are not exclusively targeted at our younger workforce. These training routes are open to staff of all ages and will be used to upskill the existing workforce.

The employer led Young Person Guarantee was launched in November 2020. It aims to give all young people aged 16-24 the opportunity of a job, apprenticeship, further or higher education, training or volunteering. Signing up to the Young Person's Guarantee can bring the following benefits:

- building a skilled workforce now and in the future
- gaining new ideas and insight from a generationally diverse team
- helping with recruitment, retention and succession planning
- developing and motivating exiting staff
- raising awareness of the council and job roles.

There are five asks in the Young Person Guarantee and we are working closely with the Education and Learning Service to develop workstreams associated with these five asks:

**Ask 1 – Prepare young people for the world of work**

**Ask 2 – Help all young people to achieve their potential**

**Ask 3 – Invest in a skilled workforce**

**Ask 4 – Create jobs, volunteering and training opportunities**

**Ask 5 – Create an inclusive and fair workplace**



The [National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#), published in March 2022, sets out the Scottish Government's ambition for a skills and education system that meets the demands of an ever-changing economy and society. We will monitor key issues in this strategy to assess the benefits for the Council.

The WFP Strategy will take cognisance of the Digital Strategy approved by Corporate Resources on 8 September 2022. The use of technology to modernise and transform the way services are delivered cannot be done without our people. Digital must be an integral part of the corporate approach to service delivery. Upskilling and developing our staff with digital skills a key component of WFP.

## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

The promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion across our workforce is central to our People Strategy and we aim for all our staff to feel included and valued irrespective of their age, disability status, ethnicity, faith, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation or socio-economic background.

There are legal aspects to this and as a public body we have duties to give regard to how we tackle discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality; and foster good relations. At the same time, we also recognise and value the wider benefits that a diverse workforce, reflecting the different experiences and backgrounds of our communities, can bring to our organisation.

Equality, diversity and inclusion form a key element of our People Strategy. Our focus will be to promote equality, diversity and inclusion throughout our recruitment and employment policies and practices; to encourage a workplace culture of dignity, respect and engagement; and to equip our staff with the skills and confidence needed to deliver on equality, diversity and inclusion as an employer and service provider.

Our priorities are to:

- improve our understanding of how our workforce profile reflects the wider community and use the data to inform future activity
- review our recruitment and selection processes and guidance with a view to attracting and retaining a diverse workforce through our approach to talent management
- review our equality, diversity and inclusion learning and development opportunities to help develop the skills and confidence of all staff to deliver on the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion

- take forward work to achieve Disability Confident Leader status following the introduction of our Reasonable Adjustment Passport scheme in 2022
- achieve the Equally Safe at Work Bronze accreditation to progress work on women's labour market equality, and to address gender inequality in the workplace and tackle violence against women.

## Monitoring

The application of this policy will be monitored through the Highland Council Partnership Framework and the Corporate Resources Committee. Action plans will be created for each of the key elements of the strategy, below:

- staff engagement
- health, safety and wellbeing
- reward and conditions (including job design)
- talent management
- people development
- people data and processes
- workforce planning
- equality, diversity and inclusion.

An owner for each plan will be assigned from within the HR Management Team. The plans will focus on key deliverables for the year ahead and the team as a whole will assess progress on a regular basis. The assessment of the progress will be reported to committee and through service plan updates as way of governance. Reporting will show links between deliverables from the plan and performance indicators where applicable. In addition, progress against the strategy will be communicated to the following groups:

- Employee partnership forums eg Staff Partnership Forum, HR Sub Group, Conditions of Service
- Central Safety Committee
- Corporate Resources Committee
- Extended Leadership Team.

