

# The Highland Council

## Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd



**2012-2017**  
Revised August  
2013

## Equality Plan: A Fairer Highland

## Plana Co-ionannachd Gàidhealtachd nas Cothromaiche

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## FOREWORD

### FACAL-TOISICH

We are pleased to present the Highland Council's Equality Plan "A Fairer Highland". A Fairer Highland presents our equality priorities during 2012 – 2017 and builds on the progress made in our previous schemes.

The Equality Act 2010 has provided us with a new focus and this plan outlines how we aim to bring about improvements through developing key equality outcomes for our staff and customers.

We want to ensure that equality is central to the aims of the Highland Council, which are to:

- Make the Highlands one of Europe's leading regions;
- Create Sustainable communities with more balanced population growth and economic development across the Highlands; and
- Build a fairer and healthier Highlands

The overarching aim of this plan is to promote a fairer, inclusive Highland; where everyone can feel part of the Highland community. This will help us to make progress against National Outcome 7: *'We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society'*. Based on the evidence we have gathered to date and the experiences and views that people have shared with us on equality and diversity issues we have identified three high-level outcomes for the Highlands. These are:

- **People are, and feel, free to live their lives without harassment and discrimination, and can take part in community life**
- **People benefit from public services in a fairer way and are able to have their say about them**
- **Staff feel there is an organisational culture where everyone is treated with dignity and respect**

This revised version of our equality plan includes the full set of the Council's agreed equality outcomes and associated performance measures. We would like to thank those who have contributed so far; we hope that they, and others, will continue to help us with this task.



**Council Leader**



**Chair of Community Safety,  
Public Engagement and  
Equalities Committee**

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### APPENDIX 2: [Highland Council's Equality Outcomes](#)

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### APPENDIX 3: [Action Plan](#)

FO-SGRÌOBHADH 3: Plana-gnìomha

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## RO-RÀDH

- 1.1 *“An equal society recognises people’s different needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and be”*
- The Equalities Review, 2007<sup>i</sup>
- 1.2 Equality is about equal access to services, education and employment, where people are free from discrimination, human rights are promoted and protected, and people’s life chances are improved and not diminished by barriers. This approach recognises that:
- Equality is an issue for us all
  - We don’t all start from the same place
  - To create a fairer society we need to recognise different needs
- 1.3 This is the Highland Council’s strategic equalities plan going forward to 2017. It is designed to build and improve on the achievements of previous equality schemes, along with our current and planned work, as well as to meet the new legal duties introduced by the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.4 A Fairer Highland is not a stand-alone document. On the contrary, it brings together equality activities from across the Council and provides links to information published elsewhere, including key strategies and plans.
- 1.5 In the current economic climate and in the light of the Scottish Government’s programme of public sector reform it is particularly important that the Council and its partners seek imaginative and innovative ways of gathering evidence and sharing resources. The new focus on equality outcomes and a duty to build equality considerations into our work will support the aims of the reform agenda to encourage prevention rather than intervention, local integration, workforce development and performance. Key to these new approaches is to understand, engage with and responding to the needs of service users and communities.
- 1.6 We have also taken account of the wider inequalities in our society in recognition that the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act do not affect people in isolation. Evidence highlights the links with socio-economic issues, human rights, health inequalities, poverty, domestic abuse, and in the Highlands the effect of living in remote and rural areas. Equality as a whole is now much more focused on people and communities, rather than individual ‘equality strands’.

- 1.7 Demonstrating that we meet our equality duties will help us evidence how we make progress against National Outcome 7: **“We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society”** as well as against other National Outcomes including those that cover employment; education; health; crime; children, young people and families.
- 1.8 In the development of our equality outcomes we will aim to ensure that services make a positive impact on the lives of equalities groups, that people have a say in the decisions that affect them, and that this is measured by increased customer satisfaction and confidence in services.
- 1.9 We intend that this Plan will be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances during its lifetime as well as being in line with our legal requirements. The outcomes and associated actions will be clear, measurable, and realistic and will be monitored and reported on.

## 2 BACKGROUND AND LEGAL CONTEXT

### CÙL-FHIOSRACHADH AGUS CO-THEACSA LAGHAIL

- 2.1 Despite over 30 year of equality legislation and some progress, certain groups of people still face significant levels of inequality, discrimination and harassment, and do not enjoy the same life opportunities as everybody else. For example, in the UK and Scotland, we know that:
- In 2007 people aged 65+ out-numbered children for the first time.<sup>ii</sup>
  - More than 6 out of 10 lesbian and gay schoolchildren experience homophobic bullying.<sup>iii</sup>
  - Only 50% of disabled people of working age are in work compared with 80% of non-disabled people.<sup>iv</sup>
  - Only 59% of ethnic minorities are employed, compared with 73% of the general population.<sup>v</sup>
  - Only 29% of Muslim women are economically active.<sup>vi</sup>
  - 62% of transgender people experienced harassment in public places<sup>vii</sup>
  - Gypsies' / Travellers' life expectancy is 10 years below the national average.<sup>viii</sup>
  - Only a third of senior managers in the Scottish civil service are women<sup>ix</sup>
  - In Scotland women are paid 12% less than men in full time work<sup>x</sup>
  - One in three Scots believe Eastern Europeans are taking "Scots" jobs<sup>xi</sup>

2.2 The Equality Act 2010 reformed and consolidated over 100 different pieces of Scottish, UK and European law. The Act provides protection from discrimination for people on the grounds of the following characteristics:

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

### 2.3 The Public Sector Equality Duty

2.3.1 The Act introduced a positive General Duty on 300 Public Authorities in Scotland to have due regard to the need to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation**
- **Advance equality of opportunity** *This includes:*
  - *removing or minimising disadvantage*
  - *taking steps to meet the needs of individuals*
  - *encouraging participation*
- **Foster good relations**
  - *This involves taking steps to tackle prejudice and promote understanding*

2.3.2 The duty covers all of the protected characteristics, although it applies to marriage and civil partnership in relation to non-discrimination duty only. The duty also covers all bodies carrying out a public function in relation to that function (a public function is one defined as such by the Human Rights Act 1998).

2.3.3 Scottish Ministers have introduced Specific Duties to support the General Duty. These Specific Duties came into force from May 2012 and require the Council to:

- Set equality outcomes by April 30<sup>th</sup> 2013 and report progress towards these every two years based on evidence and involvement of equality groups and communities
- Report on progress to mainstream equality every 2 years
- Equality Impact Assess policies which are relevant to equality
- Gather and publish employment data on equalities across all equality groups
- Publish information on equal pay and occupational segregation on the grounds of gender initially (and disability and race from 2017) and set out our policy in this regard

- Ensure that procurement practices on award criteria and contract compliance also advance the General Duty.

2.3.4 The duties shift the onus from individual claims of discrimination towards public bodies taking proactive and organised approaches that demonstrate how equality is mainstreamed into our work in practical ways. This approach aims to tackle institutional discrimination as highlighted in the MacPherson Report<sup>xii</sup> into the murder of Stephen Lawrence and focuses on organisational change rather than individual adjustment.

2.3.5 The duties aim to assist public bodies to:

- Take effective action on equality issues
- Make the right decisions, first time round
- Develop better policies and practices, based on evidence
- Be more transparent, accessible and accountable
- Improve outcomes for all

## 2.4 Compliance

2.4.1 The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is a Non-Departmental Public Body working across Great Britain with the responsibility to uphold and promote equality and human rights law. The Commission has significant powers to enforce the equalities duties of organisations and authorities, including, ultimately, launching official inquiries and formal investigations.

## 3 HIGHLAND CONTEXT

### CO-THEACSA NA GÀIDHEALTACHD

3.1 The area served by The Highland Council has a growing and increasingly diverse population. It is an area rich in cultural heritage which attracts tourists from across the globe. There is a strong voluntary sector that supports local communities and connects with the public service agencies.

3.2 In terms of land mass, Highland is the largest local authority area in Scotland, comprising one-third of the total area of Scotland in a land area of 26,484 km<sup>2</sup>.

3.3 The Council is composed of 80 Councillors who are elected every four years, and cover 22 Wards. The Highland Council is also the largest employer in the area and currently employs over 10,000 people across seven Services. We provide a wide range of services which support and impact on all our communities ranging from refuse collection, education, community care, money advice, Council Tax and rates collection, to housing and many others.

3.4 A Fairer Highland links to other key strategies and plans of the Council and its partners, including:



- [Strengthening the Highlands](#)
- [Service Plans](#)
- [The Single Outcome Agreement](#)
- [Highland Works](#)
- [For Highland's Children 3 \(under review\)](#)
- [Planning for Integration](#)
- [Violence Against Women strategy](#)

3.5 Partnership working is well developed in the Highlands and an [Equality and Diversity Partnership Group](#) has met since 2006 to share information and work in collaboration wherever possible.

### **3.6 Governance of equalities**

3.6.1 During 2011 – 12, the Council established a Member's Equalities Working Group in response to an Audit Scotland recommendation for elected Members to do more to engage in the Council's equalities agenda.

3.6.2 In 2012, a new Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities Committee was created which has a remit to ensure strong Member leadership on equalities and scrutinise performance. The Committee has also continued the Working Group's practice of informal meetings with representatives of local equality groups. Committee papers are available on the [Council website](#).

3.6.3 An Officer's Working group supports corporate and service-led equalities work and has representatives from each of the Council's services. The Assistant Chief Executive is Chair of this group.

3.6.4 Regular updates on equality issues are made to the Council's Senior Management Team regarding policy options and performance reporting. Progress is reported regularly to Committee and reports are available on the [Council website](#). The implementation of equality actions is managed through quarterly reviews of service performance and scrutiny of targets and measures.

## **4 HIGHLAND EQUALITY PROFILE**

### **GEARR-THUAIRISGEUL CO-IONANNACHD NA GÀIDHEALTACHD**

4.1 The Highland population continues to grow a higher rate than for Scotland as a whole, and is estimated to be 232,132 in 2011 with nearly 102,000 households<sup>xiii</sup>. Around half the population live in the inner Moray Firth area, the rest are in remote small towns and remote rural areas and many areas are sparsely populated. Most population growth is due to migration, with more people moving to the area than leaving, although growth is not spread evenly across the region.

- 4.2 Barriers associated with characteristics such as gender, race, disability or ill health and childhood experience can perpetuate socio-economic inequalities, poverty and poorer health. These inequalities can be further exacerbated by poorer access to services particularly in rural and remote areas.
- 4.3 Building on earlier schemes, we have significantly improved the amount of information collected to provide an equality profile in Highland and to put in place mechanisms to update data. We are also aware of the many gaps in data, particularly at local level and will continue to work to improve our knowledge.
- 4.4 The profile is summarised in [Appendix 1](#); a full report on the equalities profile in Highland accompanies this plan and is available at the following [link](#). More Highland [facts and figures](#) can also be found on the Council website. Further details of our information and evidence gathering activities are described in a later section.

#### **4.5 Overview of Equality stakeholders in Highland**

- 4.5.1 In Highland there are no umbrella networks which provide a single, representative voice for any of the specific equality strands. However, the Council holds a database of over 130 local and national organisations with an interest in equality and diversity issues. With the agreement of organisations, we are working towards making many of these contacts available on the Council website.

### **5 DEVELOPING EQUALITY OUTCOMES**

#### **AR PLANAICHEAN GUS BUILEAN CO-IONANNACHD A LEASACHADH**

- 5.1 During year one of this plan, the Council focused on developing a full set of equality outcomes in line with the Specific Equality Duties.
- 5.2 Our overarching aim is to promote a fairer, inclusive Highland, where everyone can feel part of the Highland community. When presenting the Fairer Highland Action Plan in 2012 we identified three high-level outcomes based on the evidence gathering described below, and which will help us to demonstrate that we are making progress against National Outcome 7: 'We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society'. These are that:
- **People are, and feel, free to live their lives without harassment and discrimination, and can take part in community life**
  - **People benefit from public services in a fairer way and are able to have their say about them**
  - **Staff feel there is an organisational culture where everyone is treated with dignity and respect**

- 5.3 In March 2013, we published 20 intermediate equality outcomes which are found on the [Council website](#). These are aligned to the three overarching outcomes, and wherever possible, are linked to the current work in the Council's Programme and the Single Outcome Agreement. They have been developed using the evidence detailed in section seven.
- 5.4 We continue to build on previous work to advance equality, and the new outcome based approach provides an opportunity to focus and prioritise key areas of inequality. Over time, these outcomes aim to contribute to a fairer, more inclusive Highland. In recognition that no single organisation can make a positive difference to the life chances of those affected by prejudice or discrimination, a number of partner agencies have agreed to present some shared 'Highland wide' outcomes and demonstrate where there is joint working, for example, there are shared outcomes for Violence Against Women work and hate incidents.
- 5.5 The specific duties apply to Education Authorities as "listed bodies" in their own right. In line with guidance from the EHRC, the outcomes for Education are included in the accompanying set but are clearly identifiable.
- 5.6 A revised action plan to accompany the equality outcomes is attached in Appendix 3 and includes the measure against which we will demonstrate progress with the Council's equality outcomes.

## **6 MAINSTREAMING EQUALITY**

### **AG ÀBHAISTEACHADH CO-IONANNACHD**

- 6.1 The principles of equality, diversity and human rights should be integral to all of the Council's work. To create a fairer society we need to recognise different needs; this means that the Council needs to ensure that we are able to deliver services and provide information in ways that are accessible to all. As an employer, we aim to have a workforce that reflects the population that we serve.
- 6.2 Much has been done to improve the accessibility of our services and information, for example the development of interpretation and communication support, improvements to ensure our premises are accessible to customers. As an employer we have taken positive action to encourage a better representation of women in management positions and have signed up to the Department for Work "double tick" symbol which promotes a positive approach to the recruitment and development of disabled people.
- 6.3 Further details are published in the Council's first Equality Mainstreaming Report (March 2013) and is available on the [Council website](#). We shall report on progress on how we mainstream equality at least every 2 years.

## 7 INFORMATION GATHERING: OUR EVIDENCE BASE

### A' CRUINNEACHADH FIOSRACHADH: AR BUNAIT-FIANAIS

7.1 The evidence base for the Council's equality plan uses reported experiences of local groups covered by the protected characteristics; surveys of local attitudes to equal opportunities and discrimination; a range of local and national data presented in a [Highland Equality Profile](#). An equality analysis is carried out on both the Council's annual Citizen's Panel survey and bi-annual Employee Survey. We have also taken account of national equality priorities including gender segregation in the workplace and strategies to tackle gender based violence and guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

7.2 In the preparation of this plan during 2011-12, and in working towards the development of our Equality Outcomes, we have used a range of sources, including:

- [Existing strategies and plans](#) including the local [Single Outcome Agreement](#)
- [Equality Impact Assessment reports](#)
- [Previous consultation and actions in earlier schemes](#)
- [EHRC Triennial Review](#)

7.3 The Council has taken account of evidence gathered through the following activities. [Appendix 1](#) contains a summary of the key findings from each:

- [Presentations to Member's Working Group](#)
- [Public Performance Survey 2011](#)
  - [Focus Groups feedback](#)
  - [Attitudes to equal opportunities and diversity](#)
- [Employee Survey 2010](#)
- National and local data collated to provide a "[Highland Profile](#)". This is published on the Council website to accompany A Fairer Highland and will be updated in 2014 following the release of relevant Census 2011 data.

#### 7.4 **Public Performance Survey and Focus Groups**

A number of suggestions for action and improvement result from a focus on equality issues in the Council's Public Performance Survey.

Customer profiling of different groups is extremely useful in tailoring our services to meet the diverse needs of our community. In recognition that the format of the survey could be a barrier to some people, a number of focus groups were carried out in 2011 and 2012 alongside the self-completion questionnaire. These approaches have resulted in a number of improvement actions which focus on being more aware of the needs of older people and people with

disabilities and on the expectations of younger people, for example, addressing:

- Styles and methods of communication and languages;
- Information about Council services;
- Service delivery including transport, running elections and aids and adaptations and;
- Attitudes and awareness levels.

### **Attitudes to Equality and Discrimination**

The survey includes a number of questions related to equality which allowed for comparable insights with the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2010: Attitudes to discrimination and positive action.

The questions on public attitudes to diversity and equality appear to show improving tolerance and acceptance of diversity in our community. Responses to our annual attitudes and performance survey indicate tolerance levels may be increasing. 73.6% of the population agree Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all kinds of prejudice, up from 66.9% in 2011. 51.7% of people prefer to live in an area with lots of different kinds of people, up from 47% in 2011. 86% people feel their community is accepting of people coming to live here from outside the Highlands, the same high level as last year.

## **8 INVOLVEMENT, ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION WITH EQUALITY STAKEHOLDERS**

### **GABHAIL A-STEACH, COMPÀIRTEACHAS AGUS CO-CHOMHAIRLE LE LUCHD-ÙIDH CO-IONANNACHD**

8.1 As described above, during the development of this plan there has already been extensive consultation and engagement activity with:

- Representatives from equalities groups;
- National equality organisations;
- Council's officers equalities working group and senior management teams;
- Elected Members
- Community planning partners;
- Other Scottish local authorities.

Involvement with equality groups to collect information on the experiences of their members has ranged from focus group consultations, presentations from groups to Members and staff and on-going contact with a range of groups.

8.2 Their interests have helped shape the content and scope of this plan and a key feature of this plan is the Council's commitment to the ongoing involvement of equality stakeholders in the development and review of equality outcomes.

## **9 ASSESSMENT OF EQUALITY IMPACT**

### **MEASADH BUAIDH CO-IONANNACHD**

- 9.1 This is another requirement of the legislative duties, and we have already amended our process in response to the Equality Act 2010. We aim to improve our Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) process, to build on the lessons learnt and involve a more targeted approach to equalities impact assessment.
- 9.2 Our process consists of the following steps:
- Screening for relevance – a short form that helps colleagues to ascertain whether or not a full EQIA is required.
  - EQIA report – a concise template that takes colleagues through the full assessment process.
- 9.3 In the interests of openness and transparency, we will publish all completed EQIA reports on the Council’s website. Internal audit on compliance with EQIA processes is also used.
- 9.4 Future EQIAs will be recorded and monitored using an electronic toolkit.

## **10 EMPLOYMENT AND EQUAL PAY INFORMATION**

### **FIOSRACHADH COSNAIDH AGUS CO-IONANNACHD PÀIGHIDH**

- 10.1 The specific duties include a requirement to collect and publish a range of recruitment and employment information on an annual basis. This covers information on all protected characteristics, as well as additional Equal Pay information requirements for gender, and in the future disability and ethnicity.
- 10.2 This information is published in line with the new specific duties. The data collected depends on staff and applicants providing equality monitoring information. Work will be carried out to ensure improved data collection is in place and that staff understand the reasons behind the data collection. It is anticipated that this will help staff to feel comfortable disclosing personal information.

## **11 KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS AND TRAINING**

### **EÒLAS, MOTHACHADH AGUS TRÈANADH**

- 11.1 To support the Council’s equality work we need to ensure staff are aware of our legal duties, but also how they affect service delivery and staff management. We will:
- promote knowledge and understanding of the general and specific duties amongst our employees, elected Members and

communities

- Identify and address training needs of employees in relation to the duties. This will include identifying key staff to undertake training in carrying out equality impact assessments.

## **12 PROCUREMENT**

### **SOLAR**

12.1 In line with the new proposed Specific Duty on procurement the Council is committed to integrating equal opportunities issues within procurement, grant aid, commissioning and arms length company arrangements. As set out in our Corporate Standing Orders we will:

- ensure that the Authority's commitment to equality and diversity is supported effectively throughout our procurement processes
- ensure that the Council's procurement policies and practices fully meet the requirements of legislation

## **13 COUNCIL COMMITMENT TO ADVANCING EQUALITY**

### **DEALAS NA COMHAIRLE DO BHITH A' CUR CO-IONANNACHD AIR ADHART**

13.1 The Council also has a key role to play in supporting and hosting public events led by equalities communities of interest. In addition to raising awareness and building the capacity of communities, these activities are also demonstrations of how we meet our duties to advance equality and promote good relations between different groups. Some examples of the cultural events supported by the Council include:

- Scottish Inter Faith Week
- Diwali
- Chinese New Year
- Black History Month event
- LGBT History Month events
- International Women's Day

13.2 There are also a range of activities carried out by schools across the Highlands to encourage understanding and respect which would also support these duties.

## **14 ACTION PLAN**

### **PLANA-GNÌOMHA**

14.1 This plan is accompanied by a set of high-level and intermediate outcomes which aim to address inequalities in the Highlands and are summarised in [Appendix 2](#). Details of associated actions and



measures are listed in [Appendix 3](#). Many of these build on previous priorities; others are new and are developed in response to the activities described in the evidence section. Our activities are likely to be further refined and adapted during the lifetime of the plan.

## 15 REPORTING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

### AITHRIS, SGRÙDADH AGUS ATH-BHREITHNEACHADH

- 15.1 The Council will continue to monitor and review its equality activities and will publish reports on progress on A Fairer Highland and on employment in the Council workforce as required by the specific duties. Reports will be available on the Council website.
- 15.2 This plan will run until April 2017 and will be reviewed annually.

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<sup>i</sup> [The Equalities Review, Communities and Local Government, 2007](#)

<sup>ii</sup> [Creating an age-friendly society](#), Government Equality Office 2009

<sup>iii</sup> [The School Report: the experiences of young gay people in Britain's schools](#), Ruth Hunt and Johan Jensen, Stonewall Publication 2007.

<sup>iv</sup> Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey, Jan–March 2009.

<sup>v</sup> Labour Force Survey, second quarter 2009

<sup>vi</sup> Census 2001

<sup>vii</sup> Morton, J. (2008), *Transgender Experiences in Scotland: Research Summary*, Scottish Transgender Alliance.

<sup>viii</sup> ['Inequalities Experienced by Gypsy and Traveller Communities'](#), a literature review 2009

<sup>ix</sup> [Sex and Power in Scotland 2011](#), EHRC

<sup>x</sup> Full-time gender pay gaps in mean hourly earnings, UK nations, Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2010.

<sup>xi</sup> [Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2010: Attitudes to discrimination and positive action](#)

<sup>xii</sup> Home Office, [The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Report of an Inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny](#),

<sup>xiii</sup> Population estimates NRS Mid-Year 2011