Midlothian Council

Equality Mainstreaming & Outcomes Progress Report

2023-2025

Contents

1.0	Purpose of the Report	1
2.0	Legislative Background	1
3.0	Mainstreaming Equality	2
4.0	Progress on Mainstreaming Equality 2023-2025	3
5.0	Equality Outcomes 2021-2025 Progress	11
6.0	Next Steps	26
7.0	Contact Details	26

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report provides an update on the progress Midlothian Council is making to mainstream equality as an employer and public service provider. It also provides an update on the equality outcomes for the 2023-2025 reporting period.

1.2 'Midlothian Council' is here used as shorthand for the Council, Education Authority and Licensing Board.

2.0 Legislative Background

2.1 Introduced by the Equality Act 2010, the general Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

2.2 The PSED covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The PSED also covers marriage and civil partnerships with regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination in employment.

2.3 Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, public authorities in Scotland are also covered by specific duties, which are designed to help them meet the three needs of the general PSED.

2.4 One of these specific duties is for authorities to publish a report on the progress they have made in integrating the general equality duty into the exercise of their functions, so as to better perform that duty – i.e., 'mainstreaming equality'. These reports should be published at intervals of no more than two years.

2.5 Mainstreaming equality simply means embedding equality into the day-to-day working of an authority. It means taking equality into account in the way the authority exercises its functions. In other words, equality should be a component of everything an authority does.

2.6 Another of the specific duties requires each authority to publish a set of equality outcomes which it considers will enable it to better perform the general equality. A new set of equality outcomes must be published within four years of publishing the previous set. An authority must publish a report on the progress made to achieve its' equality outcomes every two years.

2.7 Equality outcomes are practical and measurable results which authorities work to accomplish in order to advance one or more of the needs mentioned in the general PSED – i.e., an equality outcome should eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations between communities. Outcomes aim to bring tangible improvements to the lives of people who experience discrimination and disadvantage.

3.0 Mainstreaming Equality

3.1 In the Council's Mainstreaming and Outcomes Progress Report 2021-2023, it was said that:

- Mainstreaming equality meant making equality part of the day-to-day business of the Council, Education Authority & Licensing Board both as service planners, providers and employers, rather than a 'bolt-on' at the end of projects and other programmes of work;
- By mainstreaming equality, the Council, Education Authority & Licensing Board could ensure that equality of opportunity was part of the culture of the organisations, and that both employees and customers could benefit from organisations where they felt valued and their interests and issues on a level par with all others' issues and values;
- Further, by mainstreaming equality the Council, Education Authority & Licensing Board could demonstrate its commitment to the general duty by publicly demonstrating that they would not condone unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment; and that

- The Council, Education Authority & Licensing Board could also demonstrate that they would work to advance equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not within their own organisations and through partnership and joint working practices with neighbours and community planning partners.

The Council, Education Authority and Licensing Board remain committed to these aims, and have worked hard during the period 2023-2025 to embed each of the needs of the general PSED into their day-to-day operations.

4.0 Progress on Mainstreaming Equality 2023-2025

4.1 Ensuring a genuine commitment to equality through all levels of Council structures and planning procedures

The service planning structure of the Council includes the Single Midlothian Plan (SMP) and supporting plans including service plans.

In Midlothian, partners work together through the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) which is the overarching partnership for this local authority area. The CPP brings together public services, the third sector, the business community and community organisations that are based or working in Midlothian.

Revision of the priorities for the CPP which are to reduce inequalities in: learning outcomes; health outcomes; and economic circumstances and now includes to reduce carbon emissions in Midlothian to net zero by 2045. The strapline of the partnership is 'Midlothian - A Great Place to Grow'.

4.2 Understanding the impact of our work – Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

The Council uses a robust and comprehensive Integrated Impact Assessment methodology to deliver fairer outcomes for all of our citizens, and to ensure that we meet our legal obligations in relation to equality and human rights, children's rights, socio-economic disadvantage (i.e. poverty), climate change, sustainability and the environment.

In September 2024, the Council updated its IIA template and guidance to include considerations of children's rights in response to the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an

international treaty which sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights possessed by all children up to the age of 18. The UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 incorporates the UNCRC into Scots Law to the maximum extent of the devolved powers of the Scottish Parliament. The UNCRC Act requires public authorities to respect children's rights in the exercise of all their functions, not just in education and early years provision.

The IIA process also covers the protected characteristics and the PSED, poverty and the Fairer Scotland Duty, and human rights under the Human Rights Act 1998. The 2018 Fairer Scotland Duty places a legal responsibility on public authorities to actively consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage (i.e. poverty). The Human Rights Act 1998 makes it unlawful for a public authority to act in a way that is incompatible with a person's human rights under the European Convention on Human Rights.

There is also a screening section on the environment which directs officers to use the Scottish Government's Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) tool if a significant environmental impact is anticipated. Further information on considerations related to the environment, climate change and sustainability – including instances when an SEA is required – is provided in the new IIA guidance.

Completed impact assessments are published on the Council website.

4.3 Equalities monitoring

The Council continues to use equalities monitoring to gather and analyse information about service users where possible and appropriate. Plans to continue to develop our approach to equality monitoring and data collection need to ensure that we meet the requirements of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and also ensure that any information collected reflects the most up to date approach to monitoring, and gives us the information we need to develop responsive services.

To improve equalities monitoring as an employer, the Council launched a Personal Data Audit towards the end of 2020. Encouraging staff to ensure that their personal data is updated to ensure appropriate and meaningful consideration and planning with regard to protected characteristics can be undertaken. An internal communications campaign aimed at increasing the rate of staff responses to

equality monitoring questions will be launched in summer 2025. Together with changes to how this information is gathered on the Council's workforce IT system, it is hoped that this campaign will improve staff disclosure rates for all protected characteristics.

Annual Employee Information Analysis Reports can be found on the Council website here. The next iteration of this report, including the Council's Equal Pay Statement and information on pay gaps and occupational segregation, will be published in August 2025.

4.4 Building organisational capacity – equality and diversity training

Training continues to be an important method of mainstreaming equality, diversity and human rights throughout the Council, Education Authority and Licensing Board. As part of the Equally Safe at Work Accreditation Process and Equality Plan 2021-2025, the Council developed a programme of equality, diversity and human rights awareness training, which focused on:

- Ensuring that Midlothian Council is able to meet its general and specific duties under equalities and human rights legislation
- Providing employees with opportunities for learning and awareness of their role and responsibilities under equality and human rights legislation
- Developing a skilled, motivated and culturally capable workforce that can bring about changes that will improve services and tackle inequalities

In addition, updates for the Council's Corporate Management Team and Elected Members on Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Awareness and the IIA process have been, and will continue to be, delivered.

6 IIA training sessions are delivered each year by the Pan-Lothian Impact Assessment Steering Group (Midlothian Council, East Lothian Council, West Lothian, City of Edinburgh Council, NHS Lothian). A total of 23 Midlothian Council employees undertook IIA training in 2024. The purpose of these sessions is to help ensure that officers thoroughly and actively consider the rights and wellbeing of protected characteristic groups when developing policies. Following a recent update to make the Council's impact assessment process more comprehensive

and robust, there is a sustained push to increase the visibility and attendance of this training. 11 Midlothian Council employees participated the first session of the year in January 2025. A further five sessions are scheduled throughout the year.

15 Council staff attended a webinar on using and promoting Contact Scotland BSL in October 2024. Contact Scotland BSL is Scotland's national video relay interpretation service for British Sign Language users. Further awareness-raising sessions will be held throughout the duration of the Midlothian Council BSL Plan 2024-2030.

4.5 Midlothian People's Equality Group (MPEG)

The Midlothian People's Equality Group (MPEG) is a group of local people with diverse backgrounds who aim to:

- Promote equality and challenge prejudice
- Build relationships across Midlothian's communities of interest where people feel valued and trusted
- Provide a platform for Midlothian people to learn, educate and communicate about local equality issues of concern and interest; and have a voice in local policy and planning.

The group is assisted by the Council's Equalities Engagement Officer who supports the group on an ongoing basis: attending board meetings; giving guidance and support with practical tasks such as funding applications/ OSCR submissions/ volunteer development/ policy and procedures; and working in partnership with MPEG and other organisations to host events and projects.

4.6 Equal Midlothian Week and the Midlothian Mela

Equal Midlothian Week has been established as an annual programme of events with a range of organisations coming together to offer a variety of events which promote and celebrate equality, raise awareness and reach out to all communities. The Equal Midlothian Week events culminate with the annual multicultural celebration, the Midlothian Mela. The programme for Equal Midlothian Week 2024 can be found here.

4.7 Equally Safe

The Equally Safe in Midlothian Strategy was launched in 2023. The strategy outlines Midlothian Community Planning Partnership's commitment to implementing Equally Safe in Midlothian and working towards a shared vision where all women, children and young people in our communities live their lives free from violence and abuse and are supported to achieve their full potential. The strategy is available here.

4.8 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an international campaign to challenge violence against women and girls. The campaign runs every year from 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December, Human Rights Day.

In 2024, East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee held events, both online and in person, for professionals and other interested groups on a variety of related topics. These included sessions on reframing masculinity, engaging with young people around misogyny, boosting women's political representation, highlighting gender-based violence and domestic abuse, and explaining what is meant by Equally Safe.

4.9 Interfaith Week

To mark Interfaith Week in November 2024, an event was held in the Council Chambers to celebrate our diverse faiths and cultures. The event was introduced by Councillor Kelly Parry. Speakers included Communities, Lifelong Learning and Employability (CLLE) Key Worker Ahmad Rahimi, who shared his experiences of joining the Council after being forced to flee Afghanistan in 2021 and spoke of his work providing learning, training and employability support to local people from ethnic minority backgrounds. With November being Islamophobia Awareness Month, Daniel Gilius from Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) Scotland highlighted the discrimination faced by Muslims and showcased the many positive contributions of Muslims to society. The event brought together local people of different faiths and representatives of the Council, Police Scotland and other public and third-sector organisations in Midlothian.

4.10 Education

Midlothian schools are committed to equality, wellbeing and inclusion for all. The Council's vision is that:

> *'All children, young people, adults, and communities in Midlothian are supported to be the best they can be. This will be achieved through a nurturing, respectful and collaborative approach that promotes wellbeing, equity, inclusion, and lifelong learning.'*

Improvement work is overseen by the Excellence and Equity Board, which has oversight and accountability for all improvement outcomes relating to education service delivery. The Board works to:

- Improve excellence by monitoring the impact of our work to improve attendance and engagement, improve relationships, wellbeing & care, raise attainment and improve learning, teaching, assessment & curriculum.
- Improve equity by monitoring our use of Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) funding and our work to improve inclusion, equity and targeted support.

It is the aim of Education services that: 'All gaps in relation to attainment, achievement, wellbeing and attendance are identified for learners who are care-experienced, those who have Additional Support Needs (ASN), and those who are neurodiverse'.

Further information on key priorities, outcomes, workstreams and progress measures can be found Education Service Plan 2024/25, available **here**.

4.11 Equipped for Learning

The councils 'Equipped for Learning' initiative aims to provide each of its approximately 14,000 learners with a device, fostering a foundation in digital literacy that prepares them for the challenges of the modern world.

With a commitment to ensuring accessibility for all, Midlothian Council has distributed a mix of devices including Chromebooks and iPads to its learners. This significant investment in the school estate reflects the Council's dedication to nurturing a generation capable of meeting the demands of the digital age. The

initiative is not merely about distributing devices but also about providing comprehensive support and tools to enhance the learning experience.

Families across Midlothian are able to download literacy support software to their own devices for free. 'Read&Write' helps with everyday tasks like reading text out loud, understanding unfamiliar words, researching assignments and proofing written work. These tools are essential for some learners and useful for all.

The Council adopted a Universal Design for Learning approach when introducing Read&Write. The emphasis was on promoting the tool as a universally beneficial resource rather than targeting specific literacy challenges. By making Read&Write available on every teacher's and student's device, the council encouraged diverse usage, fostering inclusivity and creativity in the learning environment.

4.12 **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**

We are a Child-Centred Council – children and young people are at the heart of everything we do. Work is ongoing across the Council to improve educational attainment and achievement, improve health and wellbeing outcomes, support parents and carers, reduce our unemployment and ensure the participation of young people.

Ahead of the introduction of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, the Council's UNCRC Working Group adopted a proactive approach to ensuring compatibility with UNCRC principles across all service areas. Children's rights are now fully embedded in the Council's IIA process.

We are committed to ensuring that we 'respect the rights of children, young people and their families and to hear and listen to their voices'. At the end of the academic session 2022/23, 25 Midlothian schools were registered in the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools programme. 6 schools had achieved the Bronze Award, 8 had achieved the Silver Award and 3 had achieved the Gold Award.

4.13 Licensing

The Midlothian Licensing Board Policy was reviewed in 2023. The policy reaffirms the Board's commitment to equality diversity and inclusion:

- 'The Board values and celebrates the diversity that exists within Midlothian, and would like to ensure that everyone can fully participate in the social, cultural, political and economic life of the County.
- The Board opposes all forms of unlawful discrimination including discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion and disability and recognises that discrimination creates barriers to achieving equality for all people.
- The Board will, at all times, have due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and any subsequent and similar legislation'

Applicants for premises licences will be expected to demonstrate in their operating plans how they intend to support the Council's Equality Outcomes.

5.0 Equality Outcomes 2021-2025 Progress

1. Accessibility
Services will be more accessible for all with improved digital inclusion and communication and an inclusive physical environment

Measure of Success	Action	Action update
Channel Shift – greater flexibility and new ways to access services.	Channel shift is embedded as a core theme within the Customer Service and Digital Services strategies and delivery programme, and progress will be reported through annual updates over 2021 to 2025	The implementation of the Customer Services Platform (CSP) continues to contribute to the re-design of key services and processes that will improve the customer journey and increase accessibility with new ways to access services and greater options to self-serve. Modules launched include requesting damaged or missing bins and a form to report grit bins issues which includes an interactive map, making the service much easier to engage with.
Web Accessibility – ensuring our web sites comply with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibilities Regulations (No. 2) 2018.	Provision of adapted communication methods for specific access requirements (BSL interpreters or Text Relay services for deaf customers Language translation services for customers for whom English is not their first or preferred language - Reach Deck).	The following Accessibility Statement is featured on the Midlothian Council Website: Accessibility statement | Midlothian Council The Accessibility Statement outlines all aspects to ensure that we are compliant with all relevant regulations. In addition, there is a plan of work looking to update the inaccessible aspects of the website such as older PDFs. Contact Scotland BSL, the video interpreting relay service for Deaf and Deafblind British Sign Language (BSL) Users, is highlighted as a key method of contacting the Council. Staff from across the organisation, including Customer Services, attended a webinar on using and promoting Contact Scotland BSL in October 2024.

Measure of Success	Action	Action update
Digital Access and Skills/ Libraries - programme of activities to address the digital divide and ensure the benefits of the internet and digital technologies are available to all.	Provide and signpost a wide range of digital support tools within libraries including providing access to computers, the Internet, digital content, and digital literacy programs	Libraries provide free access to computers, the internet and applications such as Microsoft Word and Excel. All branches also have free Wi-Fi and space to work. Library staff provide support to assist customers with a range of IT queries and guidance for Council services such as the Assisted Garden Waste service. Libraries work closely with Communications, Communities, Lifelong Learning and Employment (CLLE) and other Council and third-sector services to assist in providing access to digital skills classes and sessions whether using library PCs or their own device.
Digital Learning - improve access to digital technology for all learners though the provision of additional devices and connectivity to pupils to support home and blended learning.	Monitor the delivery of new devices e.g. iPads, chrome books, to assist educators, learners and parents to take advantage of digital technology opportunities.	The Digital strategy is in place. In excess of 14,000 devices have been deployed to ensure all learners from P1- S6 have access to a digital device Accessibility tools are added to all devices to reduce literacy barriers. These tools have been rolled out to families too. There is regular monitoring of the Equipped for Learning (EFL) project through an EFL board.

Measure of Success	Action	Action update
Adult Health and Social Care	Adult Health and Social Care Service Plan includes a range of actions and performance indicators supporting a range of priorities, including the use of Digital resources to improve the experience for clients.	Webpages for the Physical Disabilities (PD) service have been revised to ensure accuracy of content and improve accessibility; with the content being more easily read. A client 'experience feedback questionnaire' has been gathered by the PD service to ascertain if improvements are required. Informal feedback has also been gathered and recorded. Options for having the feedback questionnaire on our main PD webpage are currently being reviewed – this could help support those with visual loss, allowing for a 'read back' option. A range of media are used to support effective communication with service users, including phone, letter, email and text. Adult Health and Social Care also work jointly with Sight Scotland and Deaf Action and utilise interpreter services as required. Near Me NHS video appointments have been available in Gorebridge Library since 2022 and Dalkeith Library since 2024.
	Joint Physical Disability Planning Group Action Plan	The plan continues to provide guidance and direction to the Adult Health and Social Care Team, including identifying required actions for improvement. It is regularly reviewed and updated.

2. Housing
People have access to a home that is warm, affordable, accessible and that meets their needs

Measure of Success	Action	Action update
Increased supply and access to affordable housing via the Strategic Housing Investment Plan, and improved options to support independent living for those with complex needs via Housing First initiative. Approaches to prevent and address isolation are strengthened across communities	• Access to housing and the supply of new housing has increased across all tenures in Midlothian • Improve Place Making in Midlothian • The needs of households with particular needs will be addressed and all households will have equal access to housing and housing services • Housing in all tenures will be more energy efficient and fewer households will live in, or be at risk of, fuel poverty • The condition of housing across all tenures is improved • Integration of Housing, Health and Social Care in Midlothian is improved • Community Justice Service - Pathways established to support transition at point of leaving prisons and hospitals into accommodation.	During 2023/24, the Council purchased 26 properties from the open market and built 181 new homes. All homeless applicants were accommodated into suitable accommodation upon request. The dampness, mould and condensation policy has been updated. Our Supported Accommodation, Housing Support Service and Housing First support service was commissioned in July 2024 for 3 years. Fortnightly multi-agency meetings are held to discuss housing options for those due to leave prisons.
A reduction in homelessness as a result of a housing-led approach to provide settled housing options as quickly as possible	• Homeless households and those threatened with homelessness are able to access support and advice services and all unintentionally homeless households will be able to access settled accommodation	Homeless applications increased 28% in 2023/24. High demand for housing is the main issue as the availability of affordable housing falls far short of community needs. Despite constraints, the Council remains committed to maximising impact with available resources.

3. Safer Communities and Gender-Based Violence

Midlothian neighbourhoods are safe and welcoming, and communities embrace equalities and mutual respect and reject all forms of discrimination

Measure of Success	Action	Action update
Women, girls and LGBTQ+ communities feel safer as a result of the implementation of programmes and policies to prevent and protect our citizens against domestic abuse and gender-based violence, strengthened by the direct response during and following the COVID-19 pandemic.	Midlothian People's Equality Group will continue to promote equality and challenge prejudice	By focusing on three essential objectives, MPEG has reinforced its commitment to making Midlothian a welcoming and inclusive community that champions equality for all its residents: **1. Promoting Equality and Challenging Prejudice:** MPEG has proactively engaged with Midlothian Council and other organisations throughout the reporting period to address equality issues. This involved organising a series of consultation events to gather input from residents and stakeholders on crucial matters such as budget allocations, transport enhancements throughout Midlothian, and the strategic development of Dalkeith Town Centre. By facilitating these discussions, MPEG has ensured that marginalised voices and perspectives are represented in local decision-making processes, fostering a more equitable community. **2. Fostering Trust and Building Relationships:** Recognising the diversity of Midlothian's communities, MPEG implemented numerous training sessions and events designed to strengthen ties among residents and promote mutual understanding. Activities included the annual Midlothian Equality Week, Mela celebrations, and interfaith events encouraging dialogue and collaboration. Special events for International Women's Day and Pride celebrated diversity and highlighted the importance of solidarity within the community. Through these initiatives, MPEG has cultivated an environment of trust and cohesion among

		different community groups, paving the way for a more unified Midlothian. **3. Creating a Forum for Discussion and Learning:** MPEG has established platforms for residents to engage with and learn about pressing equality issues. This has empowered community members to voice their concerns and contribute to local policy and planning processes. Through public consultations, particularly concerning the A7 Sustainable Transport Study, MPEG has actively solicited feedback from equality groups to ensure their needs are prioritised. The proposed improvements to the A7 are anticipated to significantly enhance active travel options and improve safety for all community members, thus fostering a more accessible and secure environment in Midlothian. Through these focused efforts, MPEG continues to advocate for equality, ensure diverse voices are heard, and promote an inclusive atmosphere where all residents can thrive.
	Build relationships across Midlothian's communities of interest where people feel valued and trusted and provide a platform for people to learn, educate and communicate about local equality issues of concern and interest	Midlothian Council supports MPEG by attending meetings and helping with funding, volunteer development, and policy guidance. They also collaborate on events and projects. The Council employs an equalities engagement officer committed to providing valuable resources and training intended to empower MPEG members to engage effectively with various external services. This officer plays a vital role in ensuring that all members feel equipped and confident in communicating and advocating for their community's needs. MPEG participates in consultations and offers insightful policy responses on significant local initiatives. Notable contributions include input on the revitalisation proposals for the Dalkeith town centre, which aims to enhance

		community engagement and economic vitality, and involvement in the A7 Improvement Scheme, focused on improving transportation infrastructure. Furthermore, MPEG members participate in council consultations and public meetings, fostering a collaborative environment where community voices are heard and valued. Through these efforts, MPEG helps shape policies that directly reflect the interests and needs of the local population.
	Staff Equalities Group will continue to inform and collaborate on equalities actions and working collectively towards improving policies and practice and implementing change	Work on this project stalled due to the sabbatical and subsequent resignation of the Equalities Engagement Officer who co-ordinated this group – compounded by long-term absence within the corporate Equality & Diversity team. However, following the arrival of a new Equality & Diversity Officer, the Equalities Working Group has been established to progress the equality and diversity agenda in the Council. There are plans to nominate Equality Champions across different services, meaning that there will be well-informed and motivated advocates for equality at all levels and in all areas of the organisation.
	Adult Health and Social Care Service Plan includes a range of actions and performance indicators which support a range of priorities and includes a priority specific to the Justice Service.	Adult Health and Social Care continue to use a range of communication methods that are reflective of the needs of the people we are working with, for example; interpreter services for both sensory needs and language. Staff are trained in equalities and diversity. A shared system to support effective communication between teams, ensuring the safety of the public and staff where feasibly practicable.

	Public Protection Unit and VAWG action and improvement plans	In the year ending March 2024: East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee (EMPPC) delivered 37 courses across 18 different course topics. This was ten more than the previous year. • 779 people attended these courses, 90 more people than last year. • 14 briefings were delivered across a range of topics, including the launch of our Child Protection Procedures, the launch of our Adult Support and Protection Procedures, Neglect, Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland, Trading Standards, Advocacy for adults at risk of harm, Marac. • 1,765 people attended the briefings and online learning events, including successful events to launch 16 days of activism in November 2023 and Adult Support and Protection Day in February 2024. • The training was evaluated highly by the 300 staff who provided feedback

4. Workplaces
Midlothian Council is a positive and inclusive workplace for all employees

Measure of Success	Action	Action update
New recruits will join an increasingly diverse workforce across all levels of the organisation, which accurately reflects the population we serve and commits to providing opportunities for all new and existing staff from groups currently underrepresented such as promoting and facilitating staff forums for people in protected characteristic groups.	Creation of a Wellbeing Strategy	A revised Wellbeing Strategy was launched in early 2024 following consultation with Trade Unions.
	Planned review of recruitment and selection processes and practices by using the Scottish Government's Minority Ethnic Recruitment Toolkit	Due to absence and vacancy in the position of HR strategic lead this work has not progressed. However, action to foster a more inclusive and attractive workplace to prospective employees from diverse backgrounds is a priority in the new Midlothian Equality Plan 2025-2029, aligned to the priorities within the Workforce Strategy 2024-2034.
	Roll out refresher mandatory Equality and Diversity training for all employees	E-learning package procured and working with the Equality and Diversity Officer to deliver refreshed mandatory Equality and Diversity training for all employees.
	Staff Equalities group	A strategic Equalities Working Group has been established to progress the equality and diversity agenda in the Council. There are plans to nominate Equality Champions across different services, meaning that there will be well-informed and motivated advocates for equality at all levels and in all areas of the organisation.
Success in achieving inclusive working culture might also be measured by rates of retention/leaving, recruitment, promotion etc.	Plans to create a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy during 2021/22	The Council's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy was approved in February 2025.
	Continuing to review people policies to ensure they fully support an inclusive workplace.	The Council's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy was approved in February 2025.

		Other policies are regularly reviewed to ensure that they fully support an inclusive workplace. Flexible Working Policy, and our Hybrid Working Arrangements promote healthy work-life balance Employee Assistance Programme and other supports available to staff Provision of a variety of employee benefit schemes to improve physical, financial and mental wellbeing
A reduction in our pay gap percentages.	Reduction in our pay gap percentages	The gender pay gap between the average hourly rate of pay for male and female employees was 2.7% on 31 March 2024 – a decrease from 2.86% in 2023

5. Education

i) All of Midlothian's children and young people are successful learners and the educational attainment gap is reduced

ii) Midlothian schools are safe places where acts of discrimination, victimisation, and harassment are effectively addressed to avoid re-occurrence.

Measure of Success	Action	Action update
Children and young people have improved health and wellbeing (including mental health) because they receive an education directed towards realising their potential, with appropriate support and reasonable adjustments when required,	Education Service improvement plan aligns with the key priorities in the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education and Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education.	A Standards & Quality report and a service improvement plan is produced each year. As well as detailing the successes and achievements of the service, the plan details how we are reducing inequalities for our children, young people and families. The plan is approved at Council and made publicly available for interested parties. An accessible version is also produced and shared with families. The Education service has developed a range of data sets to ensure that outcomes are monitored, and intervention happens as early as possible. All outcomes are overseen by the Excellence and Equity Board, a multi-agency partnership.
	Statutory duty to report on steps taken to close the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and improve children and young people's wellbeing.	All schools are supported to close the attainment gap through a specific workbook and the assistance of an Education Scotland Attainment Advisor. A dedicated Equity Lead Officer oversees the education support and outcomes for care-experienced children and young people. That extends to Midlothian children not resident in Midlothian.
	A nurturing authority- 3-year plan in place to embed nurture within our schools and services	The ASN review was concluded and new teams are now in place to better support the changing needs of our learners. Nurture leads are in each school and inclusive approaches are a key part of the professional investment in teaching and non-teaching staff.

Children and young people's rights are respected, they enjoy an inclusive curriculum and they are confident that bullying and prejudice incidents are dealt with effectively and fairly.	Policy development and review- involve all key stakeholders in the review of policies to ensure they are compliant with statutory duties, including new duties associated with UNCRC	Midlothian's Parental Engagement strategy and related plan recognises the current challenges families face, and outlines our vision of how parental engagement should be embedded within policies, strategies, and practices in every setting. The Council's UNCRC Working Group aims to promote and uphold the rights of children and young people in Midlothian by: • Raising awareness among professionals, agencies and services about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and how it applies in the UK and Scotland; • Working with staff within all services within the Council and in partner agencies to ensure that children and young people's rights are promoted and upheld in policy, strategy and service delivery; • Providing information and advice to children and young people and to professionals about children's rights; • Supporting children and young people to take part in activities that enable them to influence policy and practice and to express their views to service providers
	Included, Engaged and Involved/ Accessibility Policy and Strategy etc)	An attendance strategy has been developed in partnership with children's services. Attendance will be an outcome of the new Family Wellbeing Service moving forward. The Exclusion policy has been revised to reflect national legislation (IEI) and an accessibility strategy has been updated to reflect current context. New guidance has been created for schools to help with the identification, assessment and provision for children with ASN. The Education Resource group was established in

		2022. It is a multi-agency response to supporting the needs of children and young people with ASN.
	Digital Learning Strategy – equity of access to technology to enhance learning	The Digital strategy is in place. In excess of 14,000 devices have been deployed to ensure all learners from P1- S6 have access to a digital device Accessibility tools are added to all devices to reduce literacy barriers. These tools have been rolled out to families too. Regular monitoring of the Equipped for Learning project through an EFL Board
	Learning Estate Strategy – equity of learning experiences and designing inclusive spaces	The Learning Estate Strategy was approved in December 2023 and continues to be reviewed to ensure it meets the changing needs of Midlothian.
	Review of the health and wellbeing curriculum delivered in schools	All primary schools have curriculum frameworks that they have implemented this session

6. Licensing

i) Midlothian Licensing Board works with license holders, partners and other Council services to support positive behaviour on and around license premises, and to support community safety priorities.

ii) Midlothian Licensing Board will work to ensure that its Board members more accurately reflect the community it serves.

Measure of Success	Action	Action update
Midlothian Licensing Board will work to ensure that its Board members more accurately reflect the community it serves	Continue to work in partnership with Police Scotland and the local Licensing Forum, who each have a separate statutory role to play under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005, with equal regard to the interests of persons with protected characteristics	The Licensing Forum meets at least four times a year, at quarterly intervals, and will have at least one joint meeting with the Board each year. Members of the press and public are entitled to attend Forum meetings. The Board continues to work with Police Scotland and the Licensing Standards Officer in this regard. Further information can be found in the Midlothian Licensing Board Policy Statement 2023-2028.
	The Board will promote accessibility to all licensed premises in Midlothian for people with disabilities through its application of the relevant provisions of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 and its statement of licensing policy.	The Board continues to promote accessibility to all licensed premises. The Board opposes all forms of unlawful discrimination including discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion and disability and recognises that discrimination creates barriers to achieving equality for all people.
	Disability Access and Facilities Statements (DAFS) are required to be submitted along with all applications for premises licences.	It remains a requirement that Disability Access and Facilities Statements are submitted with all applications.

	Midlothian Licensing Board Policy 2018 - 2023 signposts licence holders to their duties under the Equality Act 2010.	The Board continues to do so. The Board will, at all times, have due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and any subsequent and similar legislation and to the need to: • eliminate unlawful discrimination, • promote equality of opportunity, and • foster good relations.

6.0 Next Steps

The Council is now working to deliver a fresh set of equality outcomes for 2025-2029, which continue and further develop our commitment to equality, diversity and human rights, with the aim of:

- Embedding a culture where respect, choice and understanding is fostered and diversity positively valued;
- Creating an environment where unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying is not tolerated;
- Understanding and addressing the needs of different groups; and
- Embedding the equality agenda in all that we provide and do to ensure that all people, irrespective of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or socio-economic status have the same opportunity to live and flourish within our communities

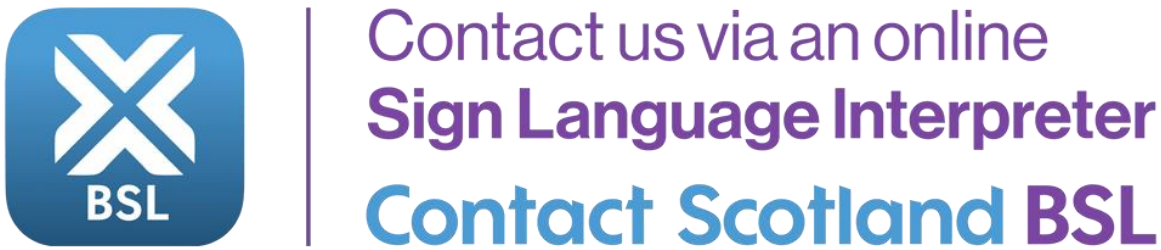
Midlothian Council's Equality Outcomes 2025-2029 can be found here.

7.0 Contact Details

For questions about this plan or to request a copy of this document in a different language or format, please contact:

Email: equalities@midlothian.gov.uk

Tel: 0131 271 3658

Address: Midlothian House, 40-46 Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith, EH22 1D

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