**Equality Briefing for Equality Champions**

**September 2021**

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| **SUBJECT: Equality & Diversity**  |

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update and inform Equality Champions in relation to equality and diversity across the Council.

**2. Background**

2.1 All public authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out in the Equality Act 2010. This means that all public authorities as part of their day-to-day business, must show how they will:

* *Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;*
* *Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and*
* *Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

**3. Progress Update**

3.1 An Equalities’ Champions meeting was held with colleagues from various services across the Council in June 2021 to re-establish this group, which has currently been on hold.

3.2In July 2020, the Equality Officer met with the Economy and Culture Portfolio Holder, Councillor Chris Cullen and the Equality & Diversity Forum Chair, Councillor Laura Brennan-Whitefield, to provide an overview of progress and future developments in respect of Equalities.

3.3 A number of achievements have taken place since the last update in July, supporting the Council to commit to its Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) by delivering on the following:

* Attendance by the Equalities Officer at a Fairer Scotland Duty Refresher Training. Once all four sessions are completed, the Improvement Service will provide a training resource to use within our own Local Authority by Autumn 2021.
* As per an action of the Pan Ayrshire Shared Equality Outcomes 2021-2025, an initial meeting has taken place to discuss establishing an Employee Race Forum along with North and East Ayrshire Councils.
* As you may be aware, work has been progressing on the review of the effectiveness of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) regime in Scotland. Work to date has included an intensive programme of engagement with equality stakeholders and duty bearers to understand which aspects of the PSED were working well and where improvement was required. Whilst substantive work was reduced in order to respond to the pandemic, the decision was taken to recommence the review via a two-stage process involving:

* + A stage one report, setting out the learning from the engagement programme, reflection of equality mainstreaming over COVID-19 pandemic and key improvement proposals was [published on 24 March 2021](https://www.gov.scot/publications/equality-outcomes-mainstreaming-report-2021-mainstreaming-report/)
	+ Stage two involved a programme of further engagement and consultation to progress the areas of focus identified in the stage one report. A response by South Ayrshire Council was provided for the Review of the Operation of Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in Scotland, in August 2021.
* The South Ayrshire Council Gaelic Language Plan 2020-2025 (GLP) Annual Monitoring Report 2020-2021 has been prepared with the support from various services, in particular, from Education and our Equality Champions. Following approval from the next Leadership Panel, this report will be forwarded to Bòrd na Gàidhlig and subsequently uploaded on our Council website.
* The Ayrshire Shared British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan (2018-2024) Interim Progress Report for 2018-2021 has been prepared with support from various services and Equality Champions, along with partners from the Ayrshire Equality Partnership. Following approval from the next Leadership Panel, this report will be published on our Council website and a BSL video will also be uploaded.
* You may be aware of the Scottish Government’s commitment to develop an ethnicity pay gap strategy, as part of the objective to improve labour market outcomes for minority ethnic people in Scotland. The strategy will support employers to evidence how different minority ethnic groups are represented in an organisation, across different pay bands. It will also help employers to understand if there are unfair disparities and help drive strategies for the better recruitment, retention, and progression of minority ethnic groups. To inform the development of the strategy, a response was prepared with the support of Human Resources and Organisational Development and submitted to the Scottish Government in September.

**4. Next Steps**

4.1 Plans are on course to promote Black History Month in October 2021. The theme this year is ‘Proud to Be….’. Along with the Ayrshire Equality Partnership, we will promote this via a social media campaign.

4.2 A six weeks’ British Sign Language (BSL) training course will be commencing in October with 18 members of staff from Thriving Communities, including front facing Reception team and Employability team.

4.3 Two training sessions for staff will take place in October and will be available to explore Racism, its impact on language and the implications for relationships at work. Information to join these sessions will be available soon.

4.4 The refreshed Fairer Scotland Duty Guidance will be launched by the Scottish Government during Poverty Awareness Week, 4th-10th October. This places a duty on us as a local authority in meeting our obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The aim of the duty is to put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making.

4.5 Further Briefings will be delivered regularly to Elected Members and Equality Champions and can be disseminated across all Services.

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