

Report

Report to:	Equal Opportunities Forum
Date of Meeting:	18 March 2020
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Equally Safe at Work Pilot
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ update the Forum on the Equally Safe at Work Pilot

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Forum is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the content of the report be noted.

3. Background

3.1. Stemming from the Scottish Government and COSLA's Equally Safe Strategy, Equally Safe at Work is an employer accreditation programme piloted by Close the Gap in Scottish Local Authorities.

3.2. Equally Safe recognises that Violence Against Women (VAW) is a cause and consequence of gender inequality. Addressing inequality in the workplace is therefore a fundamental step in preventing violence against women.

3.3. From research conducted by Close the Gap, it was established that there are no employer accreditation programmes focusing on gender equality at work and violence against women at work in Scotland or the UK, revealing a clear gap in provision.

3.4. The main aims and outcomes of the programme are:-

- ◆ workplaces better understand gender equality and violence against women
- ◆ workplaces better understand their role in preventing VAW and advancing gender equality
- ◆ employers have improved employment policies and practice that are gender sensitive
- ◆ tolerance of VAW is reduced in the workplace

4. The Pilot

4.1. The Pilot started in January 2019 and was initially expected to last for one year, this has recently been extended to June 2020. The focus of the pilot was on areas core to addressing women's inequality in the labour market, preventing violence against women in the workplace and supporting survivors at work.

4.2. South Lanarkshire Council was one of seven councils selected to be part of the pilot.

Along with:-

- ◆ Aberdeen City Council
- ◆ Highland Council
- ◆ Midlothian Council
- ◆ North Lanarkshire Council
- ◆ Perth and Kinross Council
- ◆ Shetland Council

5. Action undertaken as part of the pilot

5.1. Being part of the pilot provided an opportunity to review policies, the domestic abuse training and to consider how information is communicated. The pilot also resulted in closer partnership working with the Lanarkshire Gender Based Violence (GBV) Partnership, in relation to distributing information about GBV and also when reviewing the content of the online training available.

5.2. The outcome of the review has highlighted the need to update the content of the policies and the training information to ensure that it is inclusive, gender sensitive and reflects the current legislation. There is also a need to consider different methods of cascading information to employees. Specific action undertaken is shown in Appendix 1.

6. Employee Implications

6.1. Improving communication and information in relation to gender equality and preventing gender based violence in the workplace can assist employees to manage and feel supported.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. All financial implications are met within existing budgets.

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

8.1. There are no implications climate change, sustainability or environmental implications in terms of the information contained within this report.

9. Other Implications

9.1. There are no other implications in terms of the information contained within this report.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

10.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.

Paul Manning
Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

12 February 2020

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Focused on people and their needs
- ◆ Working with and respecting others
- ◆ Fair, open and sustainable
- ◆ Excellent employer

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

Gill Bhatti, Employee Development and Diversity Manger

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Action undertaken as part of the pilot

The Council already had policies, guidance, and learning available in relation to the six programme standards:-

- ◆ Leadership
- ◆ Data
- ◆ Flexible working
- ◆ Workplace culture
- ◆ Occupational segregation
- ◆ Violence against women

Reviews undertaken

The following policies and information were reviewed:-

- ◆ Domestic abuse policy
- ◆ Equal opportunities policy
- ◆ Training resources
- ◆ Gender pay gap information
- ◆ Communication

The review of the policies highlighted areas that need to be updated to reflect current legislation and to extend the information/language in the policies.

Training

The online learning was reviewed and the general awareness module required to be updated reflecting current legislation and practice.

Two half day learning sessions were designed and delivered by Close the Gap in October 2019. The sessions were specifically for line managers covering the topics:-

- ◆ violence against women in the workplace
- ◆ flexible working

The sessions were attended by 15 managers from across the Council, feedback from Close the Gap is awaited.

Communication

A focus group was held at the start of the pilot with female employees who work within facilities, home care and school support. Feedback from these sessions highlighted a lack of awareness of the policies and procedures. There will be a further follow-up focus group with the same participants to establish whether their awareness has changed.

In an effort to raise awareness of the topic, as a member of the South Lanarkshire GBV Partnership, over the '16 days of action' period in December, the council used social media including tweets about GBV and shared information both on the internet and intranet. Information included:-

- ◆ background to the campaign
- ◆ levels of domestic abuse Scotland
- ◆ different types of gender based violence
- ◆ information about training available
- ◆ details of support available

Information on the council website covers all aspects of gender based violence including:-

- ◆ commercial sexual exploitation
- ◆ harmful cultural practices
- ◆ harassment and stalking
- ◆ domestic abuse (definitions and supports)
- ◆ rape/sexual assault

Gender pay gap/Equal pay review

The standard requires gender pay gap information to be disaggregated wider than is required under the current Public Sector Equality Duty. There is also a requirement to undertake an Equal Pay review. The review started in December 2019 and it is anticipated this will be completed by March 2020.

Next steps - actions required/in progress:-

- ◆ the domestic abuse and the equality and diversity policies are updated and re-launched by April 2020
- ◆ the online training programme updated and re-launched in line with the policy re-launch
- ◆ Equal Pay Review completed, this is in progress with results anticipated by March 2020
- ◆ Gender pay gap information will be expanded and published as part of the Mainstreaming Equalities report (April 2021)
- ◆ different methods of communication are developed to improve awareness and access to information relating to gender based violence including sources of support, the GBV partnership has already started looking at ways of achieving this