

South Ayrshire Council

Progress on Employment Equality Outcomes and Workforce Monitoring 2016/17

Introduction

We are committed to providing a positive, respectful and supportive working environment where equality is embedded in our culture and we demonstrate best practice as an employer.

To further this commitment, we gather and analyse information relating to the different protected characteristics of our workforce annually. We use this data to inform a wide range of activities including our policies and procedures, our training and development and our recruitment procedures. Information on our current workforce by protected characteristic, as well as any trends identified, can be found at appendices 1-3.

Equality Outcomes

In 2013 we identified employment equality outcomes and success measures to embed a culture of equality in the council, with the following to be progressed in the short term:

1. Employees work in a fair and inclusive environment
2. Opportunities for young people to enter the workforce are maximised
3. Increased representation of men and women in roles where gender segregation is evident

While we have published annual updates on these outcomes, this report provides a summary of our progress to date.

Equality Outcome 1 - Employees Work in a Fair and Inclusive Environment

Success Measure - Increased availability of data across all protected characteristics

Action In 2015/16 we undertook a major data gathering exercise to obtain information about our employees by protected characteristic. While employees could choose not to disclose this information, many provided it.

Progress Our workforce data is now more comprehensive and robust. Analysis to date shows our workforce profile mirrors the wider South Ayrshire population.

Success Measure - An increase in the percentage of employees saying they receive fair treatment irrespective of protected characteristic.

Action We conduct employee engagement surveys every two years which included questions on fairness and equality at work. The most recent survey was followed by employee focus groups to elicit further information from employees' on matters such as organisational culture.

We reviewed our policies and procedures to ensure equality. These include policies on capability, maximising attendance, recruitment and selection, flexible working, equality at work, supporting mental wellbeing in the workplace and enhanced leave. All policies were reviewed in consultation with Trades Unions and were equality impact assessed.

We piloted a programme focused on improving the retention and return to work outcomes for employees with long term health conditions and disabilities. This programme received excellent feedback from employees who took part.

We implemented the national Living Wage.

Progress Feedback from the most recent employee engagement survey and focus groups indicated a high percentage of people saying they are treated fairly at work:

- 87% of employees strongly agreed, agreed or mostly agreed that the Council treats people fairly regardless of age;
- 94% of employees strongly agreed, agreed or mostly agreed that the Council treats people fairly regardless of disability;
- 93% of employees strongly agreed, agreed or mostly agreed that the Council treats people fairly regardless of gender.

We used feedback from the employee engagement survey and focus groups to develop a set of organisational values and behaviours under-pinned by fairness and equality. These values, branded *The South Ayrshire Way* continue to be rolled out across the organisation and promote a positive, respectful and supportive working environment.

Our revised policies and procedures are underpinned by equality. For example, our Maximising Attendance policy allows managers' to apply their discretion to delay the formal process where absence is related to an underlying health condition or pregnancy. This is being used to support disabled and pregnant employees.

We trained managers in the new procedures, with particular emphasis on how and when to exercise discretion and the duty to make reasonable adjustments.

Our Capability policy is more supportive of employees and performance issues no longer sit under our Disciplinary procedures.

The Return to Work pilot programme led to increased access to and uptake of fast track physiotherapy and improved access to counselling services. Occupational Health waiting times were reduced ensuring earlier intervention.

11% of our employees now benefit from the Living Wage and the majority of these are women.

Success Measure - All employees have completed equality training delivered in a range of ways.

Action We mainstreamed equality into our learning and development activities for managers and employees.

We developed a suite of online people management modules for Head Teachers where equality is mainstreamed.

We delivered a range of bespoke, role specific equality sessions to specific employee groups including: newly qualified teaching staff; front line home carers; and customer services staff.

We delivered practical Equality Impact Assessment training sessions to diverse groups of managers.

We organised employment law briefing sessions, delivered by an advocate specialising in employment law matters, for Appeals Panel members and all Service Managers.

We organised a bespoke programme for HR and OD Officers in employment practices, with particular emphasis on best practice in relation to equalities.

We introduced *Mentally Healthy Workplace* awareness sessions (accredited by the NHS), to raise managers' and employees' awareness of mental health issues at work.

We organised awareness sessions for employees delivered by Nil by Mouth and The Scottish Transgender Alliance.

We committed to position statements on domestic violence and stalking and are working with South Ayrshire Women's Aid to develop e-learning awareness modules for all employees.

We launched an Equalities site on our intranet to provide advice and guidance to managers and employees highlighting best practice.

Progress Equality is now mainstreamed throughout all our learning and development activities, including our management development and induction programmes.

We have received positive feedback on learning and development activities related to equality, particularly where bespoke or targeted sessions have been delivered.

Employees and managers, through course evaluations, report feeling more confident in their knowledge of equality related issues.

Case Study – Health and Social Care Partnership (Community Care and Home Care Teams)

Frontline employees in Community Care and Home Care work with customers who have complex and challenging needs. To ensure the highest quality service, it was recognised that managers and carers need to understand and feel confident in exercising their responsibilities under the Equality Act.

A bespoke learning and development programme was delivered to managers over the course of ten weeks which focussed on the principles and best practice of people management and included awareness sessions on how to support employees with mental health conditions and to promote mental wellbeing in the workplace. The programme also included Equality Impact Assessment workshops for managers making decisions on future service delivery and staffing, with a particular focus on how to minimise or alleviate barriers. Feedback was positive. *“These sessions will allow me to feel confident in considering and mitigating any impact on protected characteristics during decision making/staffing changes and it’s great to know that I can use an Equality Champion as a critical friend.”*

A bespoke programme of equality and diversity awareness sessions was also delivered to front line home carers, to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities under the Equality Act, and were comfortable and confident dealing with any issues they may face on a daily basis. Again feedback was positive *“I really enjoyed the equality and diversity awareness session – it covered a lot of interesting and relevant day to day topics. It really made me think and I can relate back to my day to day working with colleagues and vulnerable people”.*

This targeted programme of training and development has been positively acknowledged by the Care Inspectorate.

Equality Outcome 2 – Opportunities for Young People to Enter the Workforce are Maximised

Success Measure - An increase in young people being employed by the Council.

Action We work with partners including schools, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Ayrshire College and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

Our Employability and Skills team work very closely with schools through the More Choices, More Chances (MCMC) partnerships to provide comprehensive support to young people. Each school has a link officer who provides transition support to targeted young people to move to a positive post-school destination.

We successfully applied for European structural funding to support additional employability activity.

We introduced and expanded our graduate internship programme to give local young people graduate level work experience and career development opportunities.

Progress The percentage of our workforce aged 16-25 has increased from 7.56% in 2014 to 8.04%.

We achieved the Investors in Young People (IYYP) Gold Award, the first Council in Ayrshire and one of the first in the country to achieve this. The Gold Award for Good Practice recognised the high quality work undertaken by the Council to create employment opportunities for young people and help maximise their potential.

Success Measure - An increase in the availability of modern apprenticeships.

Action We widened the occupational focus of our Modern Apprenticeship Programme to include highway maintenance, early years and leisure.

We supported local employers to provide apprenticeships through a variety of employer recruitment incentives.

Progress In widening the scope of our apprenticeship provision, we have supported an increase in achievement rates, rising from 79% in 2013/14 to 88% in 2015/16.

Since 2013, we have provided 526 recruitment incentives, supporting 197 employers to recruit apprentices in areas such as construction, mechanics and electrical engineering

Success Measure - Young people evaluate employability programmes highly.

Action We introduced an evaluation process so that young people can give us feedback on our employability programmes.

Progress We now get feedback from all young people leaving our employability programmes, with 94% of young people rating our employability programmes as good or very good.

Success Measure - An increase in the number of young people taking part in work experience.

Action Our Employability and Skills Team restructured their approach to employer engagement, with all placements sourced through a single point of contact.

We successfully applied for European structural funding to support additional employability activity.

We expanded our successful Graduate Internship Programme, increasing it from six to twelve months duration.

Progress We provided increased placement opportunities through our Work Out! and Employability Fund programmes both within the organisation and with external employers. Since 2013, 231 young people have taken part in our Work Out! Programme and 345 young people found work through the Ambition programme.

We introduced a new category of 'Support for Employability Programmes' to our internal Outstanding People Awards to recognise the work of workplace supervisors.

31 young people (100% of our intake) have completed our graduate internship programme and have subsequently obtained graduate level employment or moved on to postgraduate education. This programme was recognised at a national level by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) under the category of 'Best Employment and Equality Initiative 2016'

Case Study – Kyle McKay - Graduate Intern Programme 2015

Kyle graduated from the University of the West of Scotland with an honours degree in Music Technology. Following graduation, he found it difficult to gain graduate level employment and he continued to work as a part-time shop assistant, a job he'd held throughout university. In 2015, he successfully applied to our Graduate Internship Programme.



“As a graduate intern, I was placed within the Housing Policy and Strategy team and found it a very interesting and challenging field. I assisted the Housing Policy Officer with the consultation and engagement process for the Local Housing Strategy and also attended Tenant Participation meetings where I worked with the Tenant Participation Officer.

The Graduate Internship Programme not only gave me the opportunity to work in the housing service, but I to work with other graduates to develop communication ideas for The South Ayrshire Way, the organisation’s commitment to a set of standards and values which make the Council a fair and inclusive place to work. This project involved giving presentations to all senior managers in the council which was a great experience.

The internship gave me the experience I needed to gain a full time post within the Housing Policy and Strategy team as a Housing Assistant (Tenant Participation). I would highly recommend the programme as I came into it looking for a job, and left with a career.”

Case Study - Susan Mitchell - Graduate Internship Programme 2012

Susan graduated from the University of Glasgow with an honours degree in Politics and an MSc in Political Communication in 2010/11. Susan was working as a part time shop assistant when successfully applied to the Graduate Internship Programme in 2012.



“The Internship Programme was ideal in allowing me to gain experience. As an intern, I worked closely with all council services to implement ‘Listening to You’ (the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman’s new Complaints Handling Procedure) and was actively involved in training front line and administrative staff. I gained a terrific understanding of the diverse range of council services and my role brought me into contact with employees from all areas.

After I completed my internship, I took up the post of Feedback Officer with Aberdeenshire Council where I was able to build on my knowledge, and use the skills and confidence I had gained as an intern to develop an online training module, which was then rolled out to staff. In 2014 I secured a full time position with South Ayrshire Council dealing with complaints and information. Since my return I have been able to use past knowledge and experience, and inter-personal skills to progress the service in line with changing demands. I believe the skills I gained and the support I had as a Graduate Intern have been invaluable to me. Having been one of the first Graduates, I feel I am well placed to offer practical help and advice and I now act as a mentor to our new Graduate Interns, providing support and ensuring they have someone impartial they can talk to about how things are going. I feel as if I have come full circle.”

Equality Outcome 3 - Increased representation of men and women in roles where gender segregation is evident

In common with many public sector employers, there are large concentrations of men and women in particular roles in the council.

We recognise that gender occupational segregation is multi-faceted and to a large extent cultural, and that it will take a significant amount of work to change this.

We will continue to use a range of methods to encourage and influence change in this area.

Success Measure - An increase in applications from underrepresented candidates.

Action We introduced a Workforce Strategy which outlines the importance of addressing occupational segregation

We delivered one to one bespoke workforce planning sessions to managers focusing on specific services where traditional gender roles are prevalent

We use non gender stereotypical images on our recruitment pages and on our learning platform

We delivered employability and equality sessions in schools to encourage young people to seek work experience in non- traditional roles.

Progress While it is difficult to directly attribute any change in application trends to work we have undertaken, applications from men for all vacancies increased by 7 % in 2016.

Modern Apprentices are now more aware of opportunities available to them in non-traditional roles.

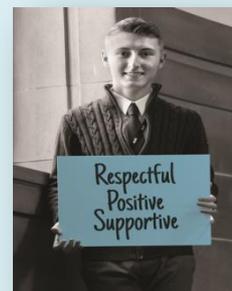
Success Measure - An increase in underrepresented candidates being successful at interview.

Action We raised awareness of gender segregation in our mandatory managing recruitment and selection training.

Progress While it is difficult to directly attribute any trends to work we have undertaken, our workforce in terms of gender has changed in a number of roles. There has been a 2% increase in school assistants who are male; a 4% increase in pupil support assistants who are male; an 11% increase in janitors who are female and a 10% increase in probationer teachers who are male.

Case Study – Shane Stirling

Shane joined South Ayrshire Council in August 2015 on a Business and Administration Modern Apprenticeship, an area where the majority of applicants are female.



Before getting a Modern Apprenticeship, I was at school, in my 5th year and initially I didn't know what I wanted to do but I knew I wanted to leave school. I met with a careers advisor who suggested I work to my strengths, and I was drawn to the Modern Apprenticeship in Business Management and Administration and IT as I felt I was strong in these areas.

I successfully applied for a Modern Apprenticeship with South Ayrshire Council and was placed in the Customer Service Centre in Ayr. I was already familiar with this service as I had previously undertaken my school-based work experience placement there in November 2013. Within front line customer services, I quickly gained a variety of experiences, new skills and my confidence and social skills increased.

I really enjoyed being a Modern Apprentice and I enjoy being an employee of South Ayrshire Council. Having the opportunity to earn money, learn and gain lifelong experience and qualifications is something I'll always be thankful for. I now hope to go on to undertake and achieve my Level 3 SVQ, and continue to strive to achieve more and progress and advance in this area of work.

I am now working as a Clerical Assistant in Benefit Services. I was aware the clerical/administrative environment was female dominated, but it felt natural to me to seek a career working in these areas. We all work well with each other regardless of gender and I would actively encourage anyone who is interested in clerical and administrative work to apply to the council, regardless of whether male or female – its skills, experience and abilities that count, not gender”.

SUPPORTIVE