

Shetland Islands Council and Education Authority Equality Outcomes & Mainstreaming Report 2025 - 2029



SHETLAND
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1. Purpose of this Report

Unless the context otherwise requires, this Report uses the terms “Shetland Islands Council” and “Council” as shorthand reference to the Council in respect of its status as local authority for the local government area of the Shetland Islands but also in respect of its status as education authority for that same local government area.

This Report outlines Shetland Islands Council’s plans for promoting equality from 2025 to 2029. It explains how fairness and inclusion will continue to be part of the Council’s daily work. By doing this, the Council will meet its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, which is a law that protects people from discrimination and ensures everyone is treated fairly.

We plan to achieve this through equality outcomes, which are the goals the Council aims to reach to support the General Duty. This includes eliminating discrimination, promoting equal opportunities, and building positive relationships between different groups.

By prioritising outcomes over objectives, this specific duty seeks to create real improvements in the lives of people who face discrimination and disadvantage.

2. Legal Context

The Public Sector Equality Duty, referred to as the 'General Equality Duty,' is set out in the Equality Act 2010. Under The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, public authorities are also covered by Specific Duties, which are designed to help listed authorities meet the General Equality Duty.

2.1 The General Equality Duty

The General Equality Duty 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 relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) covers the following protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

The PSED also covers marriage and civil partnerships, with regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination in employment.¹

2.2 The Specific Duties

As well as the general duty, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) regulations set out additional specific duties that apply to Scottish public authorities listed in the Schedule to The Equality Act (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, as amended.

Shetland Islands Council, as a listed authority (by virtue of it being a local authority as well as being an education authority), is subject to the following Scottish specific duties, and are required to:

- report on mainstreaming the equality duty
- publish equality outcomes and report progress
- assess and review the equality impact of policies and practices
- gather, use and publish employee information
- use information on the characteristics of members or board members gathered by the Scottish Ministers
- publish gender pay gap information
- publish equal pay statements
- consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement
- publish in a manner that is accessible.²

¹ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/essential-guide-public-sector-equality-duty-scotland.pdf>

² [Public Sector Equality Duty: specific duties in Scotland | EHRC](#)

3. Development of this Report

The development of this Report has been led by the Council's Community Planning Team, in collaboration with officers from across Council services.

The content of the Report has been developed by:

- Assessing progress in achieving the outcomes set out in the [Equalities Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2021/25](#) (Progress Report Update, see Appendix A);
- Drawing on Profiles, for Each Protected Characteristic, which include:
 - Census Data
 - Research Reports
 - A Series of Focus Groups

Focus Group Methodology

The designed methodology was running Focus Groups for each of the Protected Characteristics, under the Equality Act 2010.

The purpose was to enable people to share information about the key issues, challenges and opportunities individuals in the Shetland community face, with regards to discrimination, the advancement of equality of opportunity and to foster good relations.

The ethos was, as much as possible, to reach people where they are, rather than bringing people together for a specific event. This was achieved by contacting and working with other services and community groups.

A guide was created for all Focus Groups, to ensure the method used was consistent. The guide was altered to be more user friendly for certain groups, such as altering text to be as inclusive, accessible and understandable as possible. Specific detail on the approach used for each Focus Group can be provided, on request.

4. Mainstreaming Equality

Mainstreaming equality means integrating equality into the day-to-day working of the Council. This means taking equality into account, in the way the Council exercises its functions, and should be a component of everything the Council does.

Mainstreaming the equality duty has several benefits including:

- equality becomes part of the structures, behaviours and culture of the Council;
- the Council can demonstrate how, in carrying out its functions, it is promoting equality in the workforce and communities; and
- mainstreaming equality contributes to continuous improvements and better performance.

Mainstreaming equality is an integral part of the Council’s Corporate Plan, [Our Ambition](#), and [Shetland’s Partnership Plan](#). In this new Equalities Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report, we are actively working alongside these strategies to embed our commitment to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout our strategic priorities and activities. The Shetland Partnership Plan is driven by the goal of reducing inequalities, while Our Ambition includes a dedicated priority aligned with the mission for a Fairer Shetland.

Progress towards achieving the outcomes is detailed in the Equalities Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2021/25 Progress Report Update, which can be found in Appendix A.

4.1 Mainstreaming Outcomes

To support Mainstreaming, the Council will work towards the following strategic outcomes:

Mainstreaming Outcome 1	
Decision-makers and staff have access to good quality evidence (data and lived experience) to inform service improvement.	
Why do this? (i.e. Rationale)	
Services are more efficient in terms of resources and more accessible and accessed if their design is informed by service users, including those with Protected Characteristics. People in Shetland want to be more involved. Participants of the Focus Groups were pleased to have their views listened to, with a keenness to continue to have conversations, as long as change will result. Services have a need for evidence, when monitoring, reviewing and re-designing services.	
Who does this impact? (i.e. which Protected Characteristic)	
Age	Disability
Marriage & Civil Partnership	Pregnancy & Maternity
Religion or Belief	Sex
	Gender Reassignment
	Race
	Sexual Orientation
What will we do?	By when?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create easy read and accessible versions of the Protected Characteristics Profiles, in partnership with those involved, and raise awareness of them. • Share and discuss the detailed findings from the Focus Groups, with Council services and Strategic Partnerships. • Provide opportunities for collaboration between Council services, Strategic Partnerships and those with lived experience of Protected Characteristics. • Develop and expand the Focus Groups. 	Publish online by end of August 2025 / Ongoing. By end of June 2025 / Ongoing. Ongoing. From September 2025.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and run a second 'Voices for Equity' Project, with a focus on community participants who have one or more Protected Characteristics. 	From September 2025 to 2027.
Legal Entities with Individual Responsibility for this Outcome	
Shetland Islands Council	
General Equality Duty	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. 	
How will we measure progress and know we've made a difference?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of website visits seeking Protected Characteristics Profiles. Number of discussions with services / strategic partnerships. Collect case studies of examples where evidence from the Profiles has been used to change policy, service delivery and/or project delivery. Percentage of people who want to be involved (Scottish Household Survey) Number of discussions between services / partnerships and those with one or more Protected Characteristic. Number of new mechanisms for hearing from those with one or more Protected Characteristics. Delivery of Voices for Equity Project. 	

Mainstreaming Outcome 2	
Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) are a meaningful tool to reduce discrimination and disadvantage.	
Why do this? (i.e. Rationale)	
<p>To improve outcomes and ensure that service design does not discriminate on those with Protected Characteristics.</p> <p>To support and evidence that the Council is meeting its statutory duties.</p> <p>A mechanism to assess the impact of policy, service redesign and projects on those with Protected Characteristics.</p>	
Who does this impact? (i.e. which Protected Characteristic)	
Age	Disability
Marriage & Civil Partnership	Pregnancy & Maternity
Religion or Belief	Sex
	Gender Reassignment
	Race
	Sexual Orientation
What will we do?	By when?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular promotion of the need for EQIA, across Council staff. Provide online EQIA training for Council officers. Provide ongoing support to Council officers to undertake EQIAs. Provide training for Elected Members, as part of wider impact assessment work. 	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>From August 2025, review annually.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>By August 2026.</p>
Legal Entities with Individual Responsibility for this Outcome	
Shetland Islands Council	
General Equality Duty	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010. 	

- Advance equal opportunities between those who have a Protected Characteristic and those who do not.

How will we measure progress and know we've made a difference?

- Number of EQIA's completed each year.
- Number of EQIA training sessions completed each year.
- Number of promotional activities completed each year.
- Annual survey to assess awareness, knowledge and understanding of managers.
- Collect case studies examples of where evidence from the Profiles has been used to change policy, service delivery and/or project delivery.

5. Equality Outcomes

An equality outcome is a result that Shetland Islands Council aims to achieve to further one or more of the needs mentioned in the General Duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations.

5.1 Equality Outcomes 2025 – 2029

These equality outcomes have been developed to address specific issues, for people with Protected Characteristics, and relate to one or more of the legal entities:

Equality Outcome 1	
We support our communities to be open minded and compassionate.	
Why do this? (i.e. Rationale)	
<p>There is a need for increased understanding to reduce stigma, so people are able to feel respected and not judged in their community. For example, feedback from Focus Groups demonstrated the need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger people being able to socialise in groups without fear of judgement and labelling; • Older people to feel respected and treated with kindness; • Disabled people to feel included in the community and not judged by their disability; • Those who are proposing to undergo, undergoing or having undergone a process to reassign sex, to be treated respectfully and accepted; • Religious people and people who have beliefs to feel they are treated respectfully and feel safe in the community; • Women to access support in relation to domestic abuse or reporting sexual violence without being judged; • Women to feel safe in public spaces; and • Individuals with a particular sexual orientation feel secure within the community, knowing they can report hate crimes if necessary. <p>The rationale for this outcome is informed by data from local profiles, research findings, and insights gathered from local focus groups, per relevant protected characteristic.</p>	
Who does this impact? (i.e. which Protected Characteristic)	
Age	Disability
Race	Religion or Belief
Sexual Orientation	Gender Reassignment
	Sex
What will we do?	By when?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training opportunities to Council employees and the wider community on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Equality, diversity and inclusion ○ Being trauma-informed and delivering trauma-informed services. • Deliver initiatives that promote understanding of different Protected Characteristics and lived experiences, challenging stereotypes and judgement, such as the Human Library. • Develop and deliver a Shetland-wide communications campaign designed to consider our own stigmas, stereotypes and misjudgements in the community. • Work with young people, through networks such as Youth Voice Executive and OPEN, so they can encourage public 	<p>From October 2025. Delivered through Trauma-Informed Implementation Plan.</p> <p>Ongoing (and links with Voices for Equity).</p> <p>Delivered through Compassionate Shetland, a Shetland Partnership Delivery Plan Improvement Project. December 2025.</p> <p>Through Youth Voice, in the new School Year.</p>

spaces, such as public buildings and cafes, to welcome young people.	
Legal Entities with Individual Responsibility for this Outcome	
Shetland Islands Council	
General Equality Duty	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010. • Foster good relations between people who have a Protected Characteristic and those who do not. 	
How will we measure progress and know we've made a difference?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of training sessions delivered to employees and the wider community. • Attendance at training sessions. • Survey to monitor impact of training sessions. • Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Compassionate Shetland Project. 	

Equality Outcome 2	
People have access to inclusive and accessible communication methods and resources.	
Why do this? (i.e. Rationale)	
<p>There is a need for accessible communication and resources so that those with Protected Characteristics are able to access the support they need. For example, feedback from Focus Groups demonstrated the need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled people accessing information, such as benefits and financial support; and • Non-native speakers or individuals for whom English is not their first language having access to information in their language. <p>The importance of technological solutions is acknowledged in an ever-changing digital landscape, as they support inclusive and accessible communication methods. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those with disabilities who require access to assistive technologies to communicate; and • Those for whom English is not their first language having access to their preferred method of communication. <p>However, it is recognised that older people may face challenges with digital technology, particularly in keeping up with its rapid advancements.</p> <p>Communication needs will vary depending on an individual's Protected Characteristics and will require tailored approaches to ensure accessibility and inclusivity.</p> <p>The rationale for this outcome is informed by data from local profiles, research findings, and insights gathered from local focus groups, per relevant protected characteristic.</p> <p>We aim to achieve this equality outcome by incorporating inclusive and accessible communication methods, alongside reasonable adjustments.</p> <p>We will develop links with the Shetland Partnership's Participation Hub, to enhance collaboration and support inclusive engagement.</p>	
Who does this impact? (i.e. which Protected Characteristic)	
Age	Disability
	Race
What will we do?	By when?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new websites will comply with WCAG 2.2. • Review all existing Council owned websites and online platforms for their compliance with WCAG 2.2 standards. 	<p>In place and ongoing. Autumn 2025.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create 'Accessibility' webpage on how to access resources on the Council's website. This will include guidance to assist people in accessing websites and utilising assistive technologies, such as screen readers and magnifiers. • Review how best to support staff in creating accessible documents. • Promote how to access and provide various communication formats, such as Language Line. • Ensure all public Council documents include alternative format statement. • Provide training to employees on inclusive communication practices and how to implement reasonable adjustments effectively. • Consider when BSL interpretation should be available in relation to Council or Public meetings and events. • Continue to address the known needs arising through digitisation, with digital skills support. • Utilise the Shetland Partnership's online Participation Hub to promote inclusive communication and actively engage with the public. 	<p>Winter 2025.</p> <p>2026/27.</p> <p>2025/26.</p> <p>2026/27.</p> <p>2025/26.</p> <p>2025/26.</p> <p>Ongoing, through Adult Learning and CLD Partnership.</p> <p>2025/26.</p>
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Legal Entities with Individual Responsibility for this Outcome

Shetland Islands Council

General Equality Duty

- 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 relevant Protected Characteristic and those who do not.

How will we measure progress and know we've made a difference?

- Monitor all new websites to ensure they comply with WCAG 2.2 standards.
- Review all existing sites and their progress towards becoming WCAG 2.2 compliant.
- Track Accessibility page visits on the Council website.
- Number of times guidance materials are accessed by employees.
- Number of accessible documents are uploaded to the website.
- Monitor how often accessible formats are requested and accessed on the website.
- Language Line usage statistics quarterly.
- Audit Council documents for inclusion of alternative format statement.
- Number of staff who have completed inclusive communication training.
- Number of people enrolled in digital skills support.
- Number of users accessing the Participation Hub.

Equality Outcome 3

Our school communities are open to difference.

Why do this? (i.e. Rationale)

Young people describe feeling judged within their school environment.

The rationale for this outcome is informed by data from local profiles, research findings, and insights gathered from local focus groups, per relevant protected characteristic.

Who does this impact? (i.e. which Protected Characteristic)		
Gender Reassignment Sex	Race Sexual Orientation	Religion or Belief
What will we do?		By when?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review school recording of bullying to determine if discrimination is at the root of the bullying. Raise awareness across school staff, of the importance of accurate recording of discrimination. Raise awareness amongst children and young people, to report. Re-design current peer support sessions, using outputs from Focus Groups, to achieve this outcome. 		<p>Autumn 2025.</p> <p>From January 2026.</p> <p>From January 2026.</p> <p>From January 2026, for implementation from August 2026.</p>
Legal Entities with Individual Responsibility for this Outcome		
Shetland Islands Council (only in respect of its capacity as an education authority)		
General Equality Duty		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 relevant Protected Characteristic and those who do not; and Foster good relations between people who share a Protected Characteristic and those who do not. 		
How will we measure progress and know we've made a difference?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of reports of discrimination. Number of peer support sessions challenging judgement. 		

Equality Outcome 4		
Our workforce is open-minded and compassionate.		
Why do this? (i.e. Rationale)		
<p>Staff shared information about challenging circumstances (e.g. females in predominant male workplaces, neurodivergent individuals struggling in various contexts, complex Family Leave Policy) highlighting the need to review some workplace policies and to ensure managers are consistent in their application of workplace policy.</p> <p>The rationale for this outcome is informed by data from local profiles, research findings, and insights gathered from local focus groups, per relevant protected characteristic.</p>		
Who does this impact? (i.e. which Protected Characteristic)		
Age Marriage & Civil Partnership Religion or Belief	Disability Pregnancy & Maternity Sex	Gender Reassignment Race Sexual Orientation
What will we do?		By when?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on the Focus Groups established to inform this Report (e.g. Disability, Pregnancy & Maternity, and Sex), and ensure feedback is provided to participants. In addition, explore opportunities to establish Focus Groups with Unison's Women's Group and colleagues with a non-white ethnicity to ensure broader representation and inclusion in future engagement. Build the findings into the pending review of the Recruitment and Selection Policy. 		<p>By Autumn, and ongoing.</p> <p>Spring 2026.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build the findings into the pilot for Values-Based Recruitment in Care Settings. • Build the findings into the Maximising Attendance Policy Review. • Review how data about an employee’s disability is gathered, for example, using the wording used in the 2022 census. • Ensure data available through VOR is used to tailor training to better meet the needs of employees with a disability. • Run a campaign to destigmatise disability in the workplace, for example, around language and labelling, and raise the profile of resources available. • Improve communication around the Family Leave Policy, linking with other relevant policies, such as Flexible Working, Compassionate Leave Policy, using the Focus Group attendees, to comment on drafts. • Improved access to information about pay options in relation to maternity, using a Firm Step form, and prioritising the provision of this information. • Implementation of the Sexual Harassment & Prevention Policy. • Promotion of the Harassment and Bullying Policy alongside the value of a compassionate workforce. 	<p>Spring 2026.</p> <p>Spring 2026. Autumn 2025.</p> <p>Spring 2026.</p> <p>Summer 2026.</p> <p>Autumn 2025.</p> <p>Autumn 2025.</p> <p>Summer 2025. Summer 2025 and ongoing.</p>
<p>Legal Entities with Individual Responsibility for this Outcome</p>	
<p>Shetland Islands Council</p>	
<p>General Equality Duty</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 relevant Protected Characteristic and those who do not; and • Foster good relations between people who share a Protected Characteristic and those who do not. 	
<p>How will we measure progress and know we’ve made a difference?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Focus Groups. • Attendance at Focus Groups. • Number of Policy Reviews informed by data and lived experience. • Quality of data on disability of employees. • Access to training packages. 	

6. Monitoring and Review

We will publish a Progress Report every two years detailing achievements and timescales of the projected outcomes.

We will continue to use a Human Rights based approach throughout implementation of the Report, by using the Panel Principles in practice. PANEL stands for Participation, Authority, Accountability, Non-Discrimination and Equality, Empowerment and Legality.

We will:

- Involve those with lived experience to participate in decision-making processes that affect them (P);
- Establish an accountability framework to ensure duty bearers uphold their obligations towards individuals with protected characteristics (A);
- Ensure that all forms of discrimination is prohibited, prevented and eliminated, particularly towards those with protected characteristics (N);
- Support and empower those with protected characteristics to participate in future focus groups and the implementation of the Report (E);
- Ensure that all our approaches are grounded through legal rights, as it is our duty to help people have their rights fulfilled (L).

Shetland's Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report will be reviewed every four years, as required by the Scottish Specific Duties on the Council as a listed body.

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Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress Report 2021/25

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1. Purpose of this Report and Next Steps

This Report provides a second update of the progress made by Shetland Islands Council, the Integration Joint Board, Licensing Board and ZetTrans towards achieving the outcomes set in the [Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2021-2025](#). This Report covers the last two years of activity from April 2023, and follows the first Progress Report, published in April 2023.

The Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report was published in 2021, setting out our objectives to advance equality and tackle inequalities for the period of 2021-2025. This Progress Report covers activity towards our equality outcomes, both internally as an organisation and across Shetland as a whole, to ensure work continues towards achieving equality.

NB: When the Report was written, in 2021, Shetland College was part of the Council. This organisation no longer exists, and duties for tertiary education in Shetland now rest with University of the Highlands and Islands. The 2021 Report also covered the Integration Joint Board, ZetTrans and Licensing Board, in addition to the Council. Therefore, this Progress Report includes Progress Updates from these public bodies. The next Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2025-29 will apply only to the Council.

This Progress Report provides an opportunity to review activity, in the light of the evidence gathered for the upcoming Equalities Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report for the 2025-2029 period. Moving forward, we will build on initiatives that have demonstrated a positive impact, ensuring they are further integrated into existing structures for sustained progress.

2. Legal Context

The Public Sector Equality Duty, referred to as the 'General Equality Duty,' is set out in the Equality Act 2010. Under The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, public authorities are also covered by specific duties, which are designed to help listed authorities meet the General Equality Duty.

2.1 The General Equality Duty

The General Equality Duty 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 relevant Protected Characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a Protected Characteristic and those who do not.

The public sector equality duty covers the following protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

The public sector equality duty also covers marriage and civil partnerships, with regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination in employment.³

2.2 The Specific Duties

As well as the General Duty, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) regulations set out additional Specific Duties that apply to Scottish public authorities listed in the Schedule to The Equality Act (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, as amended.

All listed authorities are subjected to the following Scottish specific duties, and are required to:

- report on mainstreaming the equality duty
- publish equality outcomes and report progress
- assess and review the equality impact of policies and practices
- gather, use and publish employee information
- use information on the characteristics of members or board members gathered by the Scottish Ministers
- publish gender pay gap information
- publish equal pay statements
- consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement
- publish in a manner that is accessible.⁴

³ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/essential-guide-public-sector-equality-duty-scotland.pdf>

⁴ [Public Sector Equality Duty: specific duties in Scotland | EHRC](#)

3. Our Workforce: Progress

We publish diversity data on the composition of our employees and that of applicants, this is available on the Diversity & Inclusion section of the Council website [here](#). The Report is called the Employment Equalities Monitoring Report and Equal Pay Gap Information. In April 2025 we will publish data from 2023 and will include data from earlier periods to allow for comparisons.

You can read the most recent report and those from earlier reporting periods in full at [Equality and Diversity – Shetland Islands Council](#).

The Report breaks down the data related to employees and applicants by Protected Characteristic and covers:

- Recruitment Information – applicants, applicants shortlisted, and successful applicants;
- Composition of our employees;
- Maternity Data;
- Discipline and Grievances; and
- Our Pay Gaps.

To give a clear picture of patterns of employment, we split our job roles into nine separate groups which we call Broad Occupational Categories. The categories and typical jobs in each are as follows:

Broad Occupational Category	Typical roles
Business Support	Administrative, Clerical & Business Support Assistant; Library Assistant, Personal Assistant
Care	Social Care Worker, Home Help, Housing Support Worker
Catering and Cleaning	Cleaner, Kitchen Assistant, Cook
Leadership**	Chief Executive, Director, Executive Manager, Senior Team Leader, Team Leader, Head Teacher
Learning and School Support**	Learning Support Worker; Youth Worker; Early Years Worker, Supervisory Assistant, Auxiliary
Marine	Deckhand, Mate, Marine Pilot, Skipper
Professional and Technical	Social Worker; Planning Officer; Solicitor
Teaching**	Depute Head Teacher, Principal Teacher, Teacher
Trades and Operational**	Janitor; Road Worker, Burial Grounds, Waste Operative, Stores Person

**Note:

In 2023 we changed the category name from Learning to Learning & School Support. We moved Supervisory Assistant and Auxiliary from Trades and Operational, and Head Teachers from Teaching into Leadership.

We did this to align more closely with national guidance on “achieving a consistent approach to Gender pay gap reporting across all Scottish Councils” issued by the Society of Personnel and Development Scotland 15 March 2024.

We publish our Equal Pay Statement which is updated each four years. The most up-to-date Equal Pay Statement will cover the period 2025-2029, and is available on the Council website here. It sets out our commitment to the principle of equal pay for all our employees and to reducing occupational segregation. The Equal Pay Statement for 2025-29 includes information on occupational segregation, related to contracted employees employed in 2023; where the total number of employees was 3,493. The Protected Characteristics looked at for occupational segregation are sex, disability and ethnicity.

Key points from 2023 data:

- Our contracted workforce was 72% female and 28% male, the same ratio as 2017/18, 2019/20 and 2021/22;
- Our Relief/Supply workers in this period was 82% female and 18% male;
- Our part-time employees and workers were 86% female and 14% male; and
- Occupational Segregation (the unequal distribution of women and men across different types and levels of work) remains a significant issue in our workplace.

Our 2023 data shows the breakdown between men and women for all the Broad Occupational Categories described in the table above. This year we have made some changes in which Broad Occupational Categories some roles fall into; to make it easier to compare our organisation with other Scottish Local Authorities.

Changes since the last period include:

- Care remains very female dominated but there was a slight increase in more males employed in this period;
- Marine remains very male dominated but there was a small increase in more females employed in this period; and
- Leadership is now female dominated; this is mostly explained by Head Teacher roles moving from the Teacher to the Leadership Broad Occupational Category.

Our recruitment data shows:

- Some Broad Occupational Categories show an unequal distribution of applications from women and men; for example, 68% of applicants for Leadership roles in 2023 are men (up from 60% in 2021/22).
- In Care, 29.5% of applications were from men in 2023, this is an improvement from 21% of male applicants in 2021/22. During 2021/22 in Marine 99% of applicants were men, this has reduced in 2023 to 92%, and still reflects significant occupational segregation.
- In 2023 there were vacancies in Marine where all the applicants were male (Master, Marine Pilot, Port Safety Officer). This was also the case for vacancies in Trades and Operational (Burial Services Operative, Refuse Drivers).
- In 2023, there were vacancies with all female applicants in Learning (Playworker).
- The number of Modern Apprentices we employ has decreased, going from 49 Modern Apprentices in 2021/22 to 38 in 2023. However, this is an improvement from 29 in 2019/20.
- In 2023, within the categories of Modern Apprentices we employ (Health and Care, Children and Young People Construction and Trades, and Business/Admin), it is only in Business Admin that only one sex (female) is represented. This represents a change in occupational segregation from previous years.

Disclosure rates in workforce and recruitment data:

- The number of applicants who either 'preferred not to answer' or 'did not answer' whether they have a disability decreased from 3.7% in 2021/22 to 2.3% in 2023.
- The number of employees/workers who 'preferred not to answer' or 'did not answer' whether they have a disability increased from 9.7% in 2019/20 to 18.16% in 2021/22 and has increased further to 21.56% in 2023.
- The number of employees/workers who either 'preferred not to answer' or 'did not answer' on ethnicity increased from 9.3% in 2019/20 to 18% in 2021/22; and increased further to 21.54% in 2023.
- The number of successful applicants who disclosed that they have a disability decreased substantially from 12.2% in 2021/22 to 3.74%.

In 2022, the Gender Pay Gap (the percentage difference between the average earnings for men and women) was 6.58%. The median pay gap which reflects the percentage difference between the midpoint earnings for men and women, was 9.69%. In 2023, the mean gender pay gap reduced to 3.62% and the median gender pay gap closed to 0%.

The reduction in the gender pay gap coincides with a review of direct care roles which resulted in increased pay grades. Care is our largest staff category, accounting for around 20% of the contracted workforce and is significantly occupationally segregated in favour of females.

We published Disability and Ethnicity pay gaps for the first time in our 2023 data. Our mean disability pay gap is 4.55% and the median is 3.13%. Our mean ethnicity pay gap is 11.86% and the median is 11.72%. As more than one fifth of our employees 'preferred not to answer' or 'did not answer' in regard to disability and ethnicity these pay gaps are less statistically robust than we would wish.

Employer Accreditations

Carer Positive – acknowledges Shetland Islands Council as a positive employer for those with caring responsibilities.

Disability Confident – acknowledges Shetland Islands Council as a positive employer for disabled people.

Equally Safe at Work – acknowledges Shetland Islands Council as a safe and supportive workplace for women.

4. Equality Outcomes: Progress

An equality outcome is an impact that Shetland Islands Council aims to achieve to further one or more of the needs mentioned in the General Duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations.

Shetland Islands Council, Integration Joint Board, ZetTrans and Licensing Board Outcomes for 2021-2025 are detailed below with information on activities and actions achieved during the final two years of the Equalities Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report.

4.1 People will be accessing employment in all sectors in innovative ways designed to minimize the barriers to involvement for all.

General Equality Duty

Will help to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Intended Outputs:

Through gender analysis:

- Deliver a strategy that focuses our work on overcoming barriers to recruiting and retaining working age people
- Work to understand the effects of the pandemic on the type and amount of work women are able to do
- Ensure that as the local economy diversifies, new opportunities are available to everyone
- Ensuring there are no barriers to obtaining the required skills and experience to be able to take advantage of opportunities created through developments in the local economy.

Deliver on the actions identified in the Council's Equal Pay Action Plan, including:

- Equality data is accurate and up to date at the time of reporting
- Our employment application processes provide the opportunity to request reasonable adjustments. These are put in place when requested
- We understand whether there are barriers in our recruitment adverts or employment practices which contribute to occupational segregation
- We understand why our disability data is not currently reflective of the wider Shetland population
- We can demonstrate that we are a family friendly employer
- We are closing the gender pay gap
- We are an Equally Safe at Work employer at bronze level.

Develop a new Regional Transport Strategy that identifies the present and future transport needs of the region and the practical means of addressing these needs. The strategy also sets out how transport in the region will be provided, developed, improved and operated so as to promote safety, enhance social and economic wellbeing, promote sustainability, conserve and enhance the environment, promote social inclusion and equal opportunities, and improve access to healthcare and integration between modes.

Develop demand responsive, shared and integrated transport options and digital journey planning/booking/ticketing (Mobility as a Service).

Support and encourage increased Active Travel through infrastructure development and behaviour change initiatives.

Progress:

- The Council hosted their first Disability Staff focus group, to gather lived experiences as part of equalities reporting activities.
- A second member of the Council's Human Resources team took part in a certificated NIDMAR (National Institute of Disability Management and Research) training program, which increases skills and confidence in supporting employees with a health condition or disability to gain and retain employment.
- The Council, as an employer, reviewed its Flexible Working Policy during 2024. The work balance score in its 2024 employee engagement survey, Viewpoint, improved by 3.3 points from the 2021 survey period.
- The Council offered employment taster sessions providing opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes in the workplace. The MA (Modern Apprentice) for a Day "Try something Different" event took place in June 2023 and highlighted apprenticeship opportunities that were available in different industries regardless of gender.
- Council and health and social care staff have participated in trauma-informed lens training, enhancing their ability to engage effectively with service users. This training helps reduce barriers and stigma, promotes shared decision-making, and improves interpersonal communication. It will continue to be expanded and promoted across the workforce.
- ZetTrans is developing the Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan.
- The Bus Network Review is underway with new bus contracts taking effect from August 2026.
- ZetTrans has developed a rolling programme of active travel interventions using the results of settlement audits and feasibility studies.

Organisations Involved:

- Shetland Islands Council
- Shetland Islands Council's Children's Services
- ZetTrans
- Integration Joint Board.

4.2 People will be able to access the information they need, when they need it, in a wide range of different ways

General Equality Duty

Will help to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Intended Outputs:

- Produce a guide to inclusive communication
- Gather lived experience of people with different communication needs
- Actions from the Scottish Government review of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Progress:

The Council has developed and published a series of Inclusive Communication Guides, providing Council staff with essential resources to support:

- Communicating with those who have a hearing impairment
- Communicating with those who have a visual impairment
- Communicating with those who have a hearing and visual impairment
- Communicating with those who are neurodivergent and / or have a learning disability
- Creating accessible word documents
- Making meetings and events inclusive
- Translation, interpreting and alternative formats.

Shetland's British Sign Language Plan 2024-2030 was published in March 2024 and sets out actions Shetland Islands Council and NHS Shetland will take over the period 2024-2030. The purpose of this Plan is to set out how these organisations will promote and support British Sign Language (BSL). It follows the BSL National Plan 2023-2029 and was developed through extensive engagement with D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those who work with them and is framed around the same long-term goals as the National Plan.

As part of this initiative, Shetland Islands Council provided Introduction to BSL training for front-facing staff, enhancing workplace understanding of BSL. Delivered by UNISON in January and February 2025, the training included four online sessions, equipping staff with essential communication skills to engage more effectively with BSL users.

The Council has actively promoted Contact Scotland BSL's video relay service on its website, ensuring improved access to communication between BSL users and non-BSL users. This initiative supports greater inclusivity and accessibility across Council services.

Shetland Islands Council facilitated a BSL training opportunity in collaboration with the British Deaf Association (BDA), providing staff and elected members with guidance on effectively engaging with the BSL community.

Shetland Islands Council has successfully embedded and promoted Language Line as a key communication tool, ensuring inclusive access to services for diverse communities. This service provides audio and video translation and interpreting in over 240 languages, including British Sign Language. To enhance its effectiveness, guidance has been developed and distributed to Council employees, equipping them with the necessary resources to support the public in accessing information through multiple communication channels.

The Council conducted a survey of employees who took family leave in 2022 and 2023. Based on their feedback, the Council will review its processes and communication and develop an action plan to address the identified issues.

The Integration Joint Board (IJB) has reviewed and refined communication practices, ensuring information is delivered in Plain English with reduced jargon. Additional efforts are underway to improve BSL and Easy Read accessibility, ensuring a wider range of people can engage with information more effectively.

The IJB has enhanced its website accessibility, ensuring documents and images are designed with screen readers and other accessibility tools in mind. This has improved the availability of clear, accessible information for all users.

Organisations Involved:

- Shetland Islands Council
- Shetland Islands Council's Children's Services
- ZetTrans
- Integration Joint Board
- Licensing Board.

4.3 Outcomes will be improved by developing better methods to assess the impact of what we do

Intended Outputs:

- Audit of equality data collected within the Council
- Monitor the ongoing effects of the pandemic on people with protected characteristics
- Training on using external data, including the Scottish Government's Equality Evidence Finder
- Gather information of the lived experience of people with protected characteristics
- Performance indicators for the new Regional Transport Strategy with appropriate baseline performance data and monitoring and evaluation plan.

Progress:

The Council has improved its Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) process by developing a new template and guidance. This is all readily available on the Council's intranet, for staff, with support in place through Community Planning & Development. There are clear links to up to date evidence to support officers, through data and lived experiences, strengthening equality considerations.

Shetland Islands Council now publishes reports on ethnicity and disability pay gaps alongside the gender pay gap for its employees. For each of these protected characteristics, both the mean and median pay gaps are provided. Additionally, the Council has published a quartile analysis for sex, disability, and ethnicity in its Equal Pay Statement 2025–2029 occupational segregation data.

In 2024, Shetland Islands Council launched a campaign to encourage employees to share their equalities data. This included organisation-wide email communications, guidance for employees using the online leave system to update their monitoring information, and engagement through the employee portal to emphasise how high disclosure rates contribute to a more inclusive working environment.

The IJB has increased its use of focus groups and customer group discussions to gather insights from people with lived experience. This approach has been used in Self-Directed Support (SDS) reviews, concern meetings, equality work, and Strategic Plan development, ensuring that services are shaped around real user experiences and needs.

Interact and MS Teams have been effectively utilised to streamline internal communications, improving information sharing among staff and ensuring greater alignment in service delivery throughout the Council and IJB.

ZetTrans is applying an active travel monitoring framework to assess the impact of their activities.

Organisations Involved:

- Shetland Islands Council
- Shetland Islands Council's Children's Services
- ZetTrans
- Integration Joint Board
- Licensing Board.

4.4 The number of children, young people and adults affected by gender-based violence, particularly domestic abuse and sexual violence will be reduced, and the consequences will be minimised

Intended Outputs:

- Multi-agency training programmes
- Comprehensive education programmes for young people
- Signposting and referral pathways
- Review perpetrator programmes
- Better understanding of the travel needs/habits and challenges faced by women – e.g. in relation to journey mode, purpose (including trip-chaining) and personal safety concerns.

Progress:

By embedding trauma-informed practices, Council and Integration Joint Board staff are now better equipped to support individuals affected by gender-based violence. This training has helped reduce stigma, improve communication, and create a more supportive environment for those seeking help.

The Council has adopted a Sexual Harassment Prevention and Action Policy, reinforcing its zero-tolerance stance on sexual harassment. The policy outlines the organisation's expectations for staff behaviour, each employee's role in prevention, the various ways to report complaints, and the appropriate response procedures.

ZetTrans has been working with Love to Ride, Cycling UK, Scottish Cycling and the Bike Project to promote behaviour change and encourage more females to consider cycling. Throughout the last few years Love to Ride enabled 218 riders (57% female) to become active in logging their rides on the site and encouraging them to use their bike more often to travel for work, leisure or fun. There has been a high percentage increase (63%) of female riders participate as 'New Riders'. Cycling UK have offered Women's led rides. NHS Shetland has also been supportive in encouraging female cyclists at work to get out at lunchtime or use the staff bikes for work trips around the area.

Organisations Involved

- Shetland Islands Council
- Shetland Islands Council's Childrens Services
- ZetTrans
- Integration Joint Board
- NHS Shetland
- Licensing Board.