



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Equality Outcomes Progress Report 2021

Introduction

As one of the largest employers in the Western Isles, it is recognised that Equality and Diversity is key to the work which the Comhairle is both responsible for and involved in. As an employer and service provider the Comhairle aims to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; 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 Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012

The Specific Duties of the Equality Act came into force on the 27 May 2012. The Specific Duties were introduced by the Scottish Government to assist public authorities like the Comhairle to meet the general duty. The specific duties are:

- Report on mainstreaming the Equality duty every four years, no later than 30 April
- Publish a set of equality outcomes every 4 years, no later than 30 April
- Report on progress made to achieve equality outcomes set out in the mainstreaming report every 2 years, no later than 30 April

Listed public bodies are also required to:-

- Assess and review policies and practices
- Gather and use employee information
- Publish gender pay gap information
- Publish statements on equal pay
- Consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement

The Comhairle developed five Equality Outcomes for the period 2017 to 2021, some of the outcomes overlap the Equality Outcomes set out for 2013/17 but an ongoing need for progress has been identified. The protected characteristic which each outcome is intended to benefit and which aspect of the general duty it will help the Comhairle meet is set out in the outcomes. The Equality Outcomes were intended to be strategic and provide a degree of flexibility in achieving them as local and national priorities change in light of potential changes to key legislation and new developments. As set out in the Specific Duties progress made since April 2019 is now being reported for the Comhairle, the Education Authority and the Licensing Board.

Equality Outcome 1 - Make the Western Isles a safe and accessible place to live and work

1.1 Accessibility - Comhairle buildings and services are accessible to employees and visitors

Up until 2013 the percentage of public service buildings that were suitable and accessible to disabled people was recorded and formally reported. In 2013 the Comhairle reported 63.3%. All new building work and refurbishments undertaken are now required to comply with the relevant legislation including the Equality Act 2010.

1.2 Transport - Disabled people and older people have the same opportunity, choice and dignity to travel as other citizens

It is a requirement of all Public Service Vehicle bus operators to comply with the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR). The regulations apply to vehicles of 22 seats and over which provide a local or scheduled service. Accessibility requirements include the provision of space for a wheelchair with suitable safety provisions, the provision of a boarding device to enable wheelchair users to get on and off vehicles, priority seats for disabled passengers and handrails to assist disabled people.

All 22 seat and over buses and coaches that operate on “Registered Local Bus Services” accepted by the Scottish Traffic Commissioner have been fully compliant with the PSVAR regulations since 01 January 2020. Compliance with said regulations will be included in the vehicle specification of all future 22 seat plus vehicles used on Comhairle bus contracts where services are available at separate fares to the general public.

At present there are 20 Disabled Persons Parking Places in Stornoway which are covered by a Traffic Regulation Order. This means Police can charge drivers who misuse these bays. There are also 2 Disabled Persons Parking Places in Tarbert.

There are also approximately 200 bays throughout the Western Isles which are advisory, these cannot be enforced by the Police. These bays may be located at Hospitals, Community Centres, Churches, Schools, Shops etc. There are approximately 80 advisory bays in Stornoway.

There are plans to introduce a system where blue badge holders can apply for a disabled parking place online. The application would then be assessed from a road’s perspective on its suitability.

Additional bays have been provided in new housing schemes. In the last year some of the existing enforceable disabled bays have been re-marked as required.

1.3 Transport - Adequate seating is provided in the main bus station waiting areas to meet the needs of those who are disabled, elderly and pregnant

Bench or perch seating is provided in the main bus station waiting area. Bus shelters across the Western Isles also have bench or perch seating.

1.4 Transport - Improve numbers of accessible taxis

As at April 2020 the number of wheelchair accessible taxis (designated for the purposes of Section 165 of the Equality Act) stayed at 5 across the Western Isles. Every new applicant for a taxi or private hire car licence is encouraged to consider wheelchair accessible vehicles, although it is not enforced. Unlike in more urban areas where large firms use wheelchair accessible black cabs, in the Western Isles there are no black cabs and there are taxi operators who use their taxi/private hire car for private use which results in a lower number of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

1.5 Transport - Implement customer service/equality training for taxi drivers

Taxi Drivers are written to regularly, to remind them of their duties and customer service obligations under their taxi driver conditions. There is no enforced policy for customer service/equality training for taxi drivers, although if any customer service issues are raised then an informal or official meeting will be called with the taxi driver to discuss their obligations.

1.6 Transport - Increase awareness among the licensed trade of the needs of disabled customers and promote good practice

Taxi operators who have a new wheelchair accessible vehicle licenced are advised to look into any training needed for disabled customers.

1.7 Employment - The rural bus service supports the need of vulnerable people to travel for work and leisure

The Comhairle realises the importance of consulting with bus service users and in December 2018 the public were consulted to get feedback on the demand for bus service routes and timetables as well as the reason for travelling. Further consultation planned for early 2020 was postponed due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on public bus services. The local Community Transport Strategy Working Group for the Western Isles meets at regular intervals to discuss transport matters.

1.8 Employment - Access to more childcare and affordable childcare (making the labour market more accessible to females)

Following the phasing in of nursery service extensions over the last 3 years, the Early Learning & Childcare Expansion was fully and successfully completed in October 2020. All nurseries in the Western Isles now have increased opening times in line with the demands of local parents and offer 1,140 hours of free ELC to all eligible children aged 2 to 5 years old. In addition, the ELC offer is flexible to meet the needs of parents, giving the choice of term-time or full-year placements and choice of attendance days and time. 18 Local Authority nurseries are spread throughout the islands – 8 of these offer a full-year service and 10 offer a term-time extended day service. In addition, the Comhairle works closely with the five partner nurseries who also deliver the increased free hours. These services are being well used, children are taking advantage of additional time in nursery to support their development and feedback from parents has been very positive.

1.9 Employment - Support and develop new and existing businesses

Business Gateway is committed to supporting new and existing businesses. It continues to support business start-up and growth through delivering a suite of funding schemes, information and advice. In 2019/20, 60% of business start-ups supported through Business Gateway were female, an increase on the previous year's figure of 47%. There continues to be a good uptake of services provided by Business Gateway regardless of gender. A significantly higher proportion of workshop attendees are female. Excluding workshop attendees, 56% of those accessing other Business Gateway services in 2019/20 were female and 44% were male.

During 2019/20 Business Gateway achieved the following:

- 56 new Business start-ups were supported
- 10 existing businesses with growth potential received support to develop their growth plans
- 55 Business Skills workshops were held, an increase on the level of activity in the previous year
- 59.25 jobs were created or safeguarded as a result of our support

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is committed to improving the economic health and wellbeing of the Outer Hebrides by promoting innovation and diversity in the private sector, and supporting local communities in their efforts to generate economic activity. In the context of challenging economic conditions for local authorities, the level of funding available and the way in which it is distributed must ensure that the local economy derives the maximum amount of benefit from any public expenditure.

To this end, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Business Gateway service aims to stimulate local economic activity by supporting individuals to turn ideas into commercial reality. Through OHYESS, financial assistance is provided to assist applicants with the costs related to starting a new business venture, where these projects meet key eligibility criteria and will result in extensive local benefits.

OHYESS is fully funded by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and delivered by the Comhairle's Business Gateway team.

In 2019/20 the Outer Hebrides Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme (OHYES) supported 7 young people to startup businesses, of whom 57% were male and 43% were female. Looking at business start-ups, the figure for female business startups remains higher than those among males.

Performance Reporting:	2015/16	2016/16	2016/17	2016/17	2017/18	2017/18	2018/19	2018/19	2019/20	2019/20
Business Support	Male	Female								
Start-Ups	17	31	18	23	24	27	38	34	22	33
Enquiries (Pre-Start)	101	104	103	85	107	98	84	111	88	105
Enquiries (Existing)	44	39	65	48	37	46	64	35	43	51
Specialist Support	15	28	26	66	47	69	43	49	24	40
Sub-Growth	8	4	9	5	10	10	13	6	3	3
Workshop Attendees	151	271	188	342	188	350	150	469	137	322
OHYES	0	0	0	0	8	9	14	18	4	3
TOTALS	336	477	409	569	421	609	406	722	321	557

The figures for 2019/20 have recently been compiled and overall show an increase in the number of female's enquiring and being supported in business.

In 2018/19 Scottish Government funding was secured for a further phase, the 'DigitalBoost' programme. The aim of the Programme is to strengthen Scottish small and medium-sized enterprises knowledge and skills in digital technology, enabling them to enter new markets, trade internationally, increase business efficiency and increase employment opportunities. DigitalBoost is managed and delivered by Business Gateways across Scotland.

The Outer Hebrides Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme (OHYES) was established to support and encourage young entrepreneurs in setting up in business. It ran successfully for two years, helping to support 43 business start-ups. Funding in-principle has been approved from Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) to allow a similar scheme to continue for a further two years in partnership - with HIE providing the grant funding and the Comhairle providing Business Gateway staff resources to administer and deliver the new scheme.

Connectivity

In terms of 4G mobile coverage, the following are the highlights for the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar area:

- Number of existing sites being upgraded to 4G = 48
- Number completed and in service = 38 (no change from March 2020)
- Number of new sites planned by EE/Three/Vodafone/O2 = 33
- Number of new sites now in service = 22 (increase of 3 since Mar 2020)
- Scottish Government Mobile Action Planned infill sites confirmed = 4 (1 New)
- Scottish Government Mobile Action Planned infill sites under consideration = 3
- Number of additional sites planned by Home Office = 0

When all current planned sites are built and in service the Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar Council area will have circa 85 4G sites.

From the 2019 SLAED Indicators, the percentage of premises unable to access 10 M/Bit/s broadband was 6.4%, against a national figure of 4.2%. In terms of Superfast Broadband, the percentage of premises able to access services was 73.9% against a national average of 93.3%.

1.10 Communities - Reduce opportunities for under-age consumption of alcohol

There have been numerous licensing visits to premises since 2017 but less since 2020 due to COVID. These visits provide an opportunity to discuss issues regarding sale of alcohol to minors, sale of alcohol to intoxicated or vulnerable people. It is ensured that appropriate signage is used to make the public aware of issues and that the premises deal with issues when they arise.

In addition to the Licensing Board and the Licensing Forum meetings additional regular multi-agency meetings are held to discuss related matters; attendees at such meeting include Comhairle, Police Scotland and Fire Scotland. These meetings are undertaken to ensure that large-scale and smaller events that the public attend are run responsibly and issues such as underage drinking, anti-social behaviour etc. are discussed with event organisers prior to an event, to ensure that any foreseeable issues are dealt with.

1.11 Communities -Increase awareness among the licensed trade of the needs of disabled customers and promote good practice.

In addition to premises licence application forms, all applicants are required to complete a Disabled Access Statement. When an application is made for a new premises liquor licence the application is forwarded to Building Standards and Planning within the Comhairle and they deal with accessibility matters with applicants to ensure they are adhering to the proper regulations. It is normal practice to discuss recommendations made by Building Standards and Planning in Comhairle prior to and during a licensed premises visit.

Equality Outcome 2 - Improved range of housing models and related services to promote independent living and to support initiatives which encourage people to continue living within the Western Isles

2.1 Housing - More affordable mainstream housing options available for young people in conjunction with other population retention initiatives

During 2019/20, the Comhairle worked in partnership with the Scottish Government and Hebridean Housing partnership to deliver the Strategic Housing Investment Programme. In that period, 79 new properties were completed and a further 140 started on site. A proportion of these new properties will be allocated to young people.

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
12 Mainstream homes	24 Mainstream homes	79 Mainstream homes

2.2 Housing - Maximise availability of funding for Adaptations provision, Care and Repair and related services which assist independent living

The annual budgets and the number of interventions provided in relation to medical adaptations through the Care and Repair Scheme are shown below.

Annual budget level:

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
CNES-£400k HHP-£264k	CNES-£450k HHP-£301k	CNES- £450k

Number of interventions provided:

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
CNES – 110 cases HHP - 264 Adaptations	CNES – 97 cases HHP - 292 Adaptations	CNES- 111 cases

2.3 Housing - Continue provision of wheelchair / adapted housing within new social rented developments

The numbers of new adapted units provided through the SHIP were:

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
4	0	8

2.4 Housing - Ensure adequate range of temporary accommodation for homeless households in terms of size, location and accessibility

The temporary accommodation profile reviewed in Annual Homelessness Report included:

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
65 Homeless Units	65 Homeless Units	66 Homeless Units

2.5 Housing - Provide information and advice regarding house repair and improvement including signposting to independent financial advice.

The Comhairle provided £75k funding to Tighean Innse Gall in 2019/20 to deliver the Minor Works Scheme. This scheme is targeted towards elderly households and provides a financial contribution towards the cost of materials required to carry out low level repairs to private houses. The homeowner has to contribute towards the works by paying for all labour costs. The Minor Works Scheme has been in operation for 15 years.

TIG were also the Comhairle’s Managing Agent for the Home Energy Efficiency Programme Scotland (HEEPS) in 2019/20. TIG were able to deliver energy efficiency measures (such as Internal Wall Insulation) to over 300 households, utilising some £1m of Scottish Government funding.

2.6 Poverty - Improve the life chances of our people by tackling the cause and effects of poverty

The Comhairle works with partners to support the alleviation of poverty across the Western Isles. As part of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Programmes 2014-2020, the Comhairle and partners are delivering the Western Isles Poverty and Social Inclusion Programme which is part-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). ESF in the sum of £240,000 has been awarded to the Comhairle which means that the programme, with match funding, is worth £480,000.

There are three strands to the programme: Childcare delivered by the Comhairle’s Education and Children’s Services Department; Financial Inclusion delivered by the Comhairle’s Finance and Corporate Resources Department; and Fuel Poverty advice and guidance delivered by Tighean Innse Gall.

Two Financial Inclusion officers are now in post, one for Lewis and Harris and one for Uist and Barra, initially on 18 month contracts. The Lewis and Harris officer has had 42 referrals since commencing post in February 2018. The officer for Uist and Barra has had 21 referrals since commencing employment in March 2018.

Fuel Poverty is a significant issue for householders in the Outer Hebrides, who experience the highest levels of Fuel Poverty in Scotland. The most recent Scottish House Condition Survey (SHCS 2016-2018, published February 2020) shows that levels of fuel poverty in the Outer Hebrides are significantly higher than the Scottish average.

As shown in the table to the right, fuel poverty is more prevalent in households with elderly residents. Again, the figures for the Outer Hebrides are significantly higher than Scottish average. According to the most recent figures:

- 45% of 'older' households were in fuel poverty in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar area (27% Scotland)
- 30% of 'older' households were in extreme fuel poverty in the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar area (14% Scotland)

The primary causes of Fuel Poverty are: poor energy efficiency; high fuel costs; and, low incomes and the Outer Hebrides are severely impacted on all three dimensions. Many island

homes are large, inefficient buildings with a third of homes built before 1945. 23% of homes are of solid wall construction, extremely difficult to treat with energy efficiency measures, and a further 20% are of mixed construction, for example a solid wall home with cavity wall extension. Survey returns suggest that 35% of island homes have no wall insulation and, of homes with solid wall construction, only 19% have been treated with insulation.

The Comhairle has led on the development of an Outer Hebrides Fuel Poverty Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2025) to co-ordinate efforts to address this. A multi-agency Fuel Poverty Group supports the implementation of the Action Plan and meets annually to review progress and identify emerging issues and priorities. The focus of the Comhairle and other local partners continues to be in line with the direction set within the Outer Hebrides Fuel Poverty Strategy and Action Plan, particularly in seeking to improve the energy efficiency of the local housing stock and to reduce the cost of fuel. This includes initiatives such as home visits and inter-agency referrals that aim to tackle the factors which contribute to fuel poverty. Investment in energy efficiency of the housing stock also continues. The Comhairle has been allocated £1.465m of HEEPS funding for 2018/19 and TIG are continuing as Managing Agent. Programme is being delivered as anticipated and due to the continued track record of the Outer Hebrides being able to spend this allocation, additional funding was made available through the course of the year as a result of underspend in other areas.

			CNES (%)	Scotland (%)
SHCS 2015-2017	Fuel Poverty	Householders	56	27
		Older Householders	72	42
	Extreme Fuel Poverty	Householders	23	8
		Older Householders	34	12
SHCS 2014-2016	Fuel Poverty	Householders	56	31
		Older Householders	66	45
	Extreme Fuel Poverty	Householders	22	8
		Older Householders	32	13
SHCS 2016-2018	Fuel Poverty	Householders	36*	25
		Older Householders	45	27
	Extreme Fuel Poverty	Householders	23	12
		Older Householders	30	14

Equality Outcome 3 - The Comhairle is recognised as an equal opportunity employer with an employee profile reflective of and serve the authority area

3.1 Equal Opportunity - Employees feel valued and are treated with equity and fairness

The corporate Employee Engagement Survey undertaken in 2017 provided an insight into individuals' opinions of how they are treated as employees within the Comhairle. Over 59% of respondents agreed that they are treated with fairness and respect with a further 18.8% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Over 58% reported that the health and safety of employees is given a high priority with a further 23.4% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. The next employee survey is scheduled to be undertaken in 2021.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic an employee survey was undertaken in July 2020 with the specific aim of gaining a better sense of current working practicalities and to gauge the impacts on employees both on a personal and professional level. Respondents included employees continuing to work as normal and employees who's working practices had changed including working from home, alternative or restricted duties and alternative working locations. The survey included health and wellbeing, health and safety and communication related questions and a full set of equality monitoring questions. The results of the survey informed how the Comhairle planned for the future to support the development of sustainable working practices and to ensure that employees feel comfortable in their working environment.

3.2 Equal Opportunity - Reduce the levels of non-disclosure of equal opportunity information

The Comhairle have a self-service facility in place called 'MyView' which is linked to the authority's HR/Payroll system. All employees with access to the internet can log onto MyView from work or home to update their Equal Opportunity data as and when required. Employees are being reminded of this provision on an annual basis. Paper forms have been provided for all employees who do not have access to the internet. This process will continue with the aim of reducing the levels of non-disclosure across all protected characteristic groups.

Level of non-disclosure of Equality Monitoring of Protected Characteristics	2017	2018	2019	2020
Disability	34%	29%	27%	26%
Ethnicity	9%	8%	9%	9%
Religion	71%	49%	45%	44%
Sexual Orientation	63.8%	56%	47%	46%
Transgender	72%	65%	58%	57%

3.3 Equal Opportunity - Reduce the gender pay gap

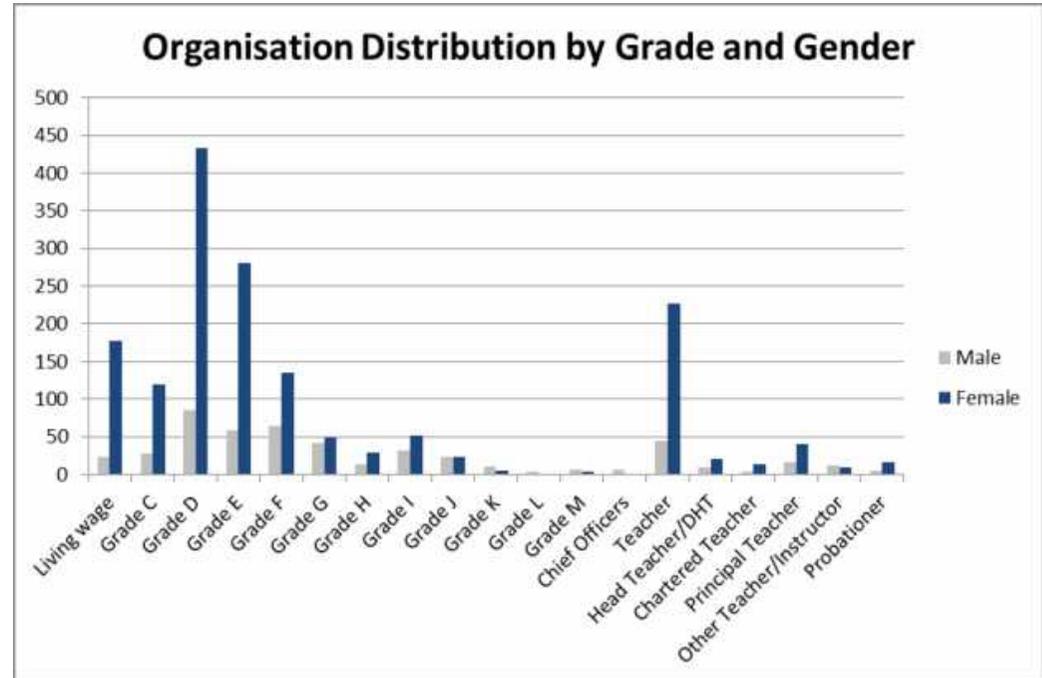
The Comhairle supports the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and believes that pay systems should be based on objective criteria. The Comhairle aims to eliminate any bias in its pay systems and conditions of service and understands that equal pay between men and women is a legal right. The Equality Act 2010 sets out specific requirements of named public authorities, including the Comhairle, to publish information on gender pay gaps through an equal pay audit. The Comhairle has completed Equal Pay Audit's biennially since 2013.

The most recent equal pay audit was undertaken in 2019, the next is scheduled to be undertaken during 2021. The Organisation Distribution by Grade and Gender chart during 2019 illustrates the gender distribution of employees by grade. Grades A to I have more female employees than male employees, as do teaching grades. Grades K, L, M and Chief Officers have more male employees than female employees.

These distributions confirm that there is gender inequality across grades as there are a higher proportion of male employees in higher graded posts and a higher proportion of females in lower graded posts. This is known as vertical segregation.

In summary the Comhairle's pay gap for all employees is 14.39. This increased slightly from 13.7 % in 20017. This is lower than the Scottish average of 16.1% but significantly higher than the average for Scottish Local Authorities which is 3.9%.

The Comhairle's pay gap for Local Government Employees is 19.13%. The Comhairle's pay gap for Teachers is 5.16%. There are no female Chief Officers.



One of the reasons for a reduction in the overall gender pay gap is that a higher proportion of women in Grades A-C benefitted from the implementation of the Scottish Living Wage and this has had a positive impact on the gender pay gap.

The data shows that there are insignificant pay gaps within each grade. The pay gap between men and women is due to there being a larger proportion of female workers within the lower grades rather than differences in pay between men and women within each grade.

As noted previously, there are no female employees in Grades L and Chief Officers.

In terms of the Single Status Grades (A – M), progression is achieved annually through two incremental points until the top of the scale is reached. New appointees are appointed to the first point of the salary scale for the respective position and annual increments are awarded. This policy is consistently applied across all Local Government positions.

The Comhairle’s grading structure is robust in terms of equal pay as there are no significant equal pay disparities within the grades.

Employee Group	All Male - Mean	All Female - Mean	% Pay Gap - Mean
All Scotland – all employees*			16.1%
All Scotland – full time employees*			6.6%
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar			
All Employees	£15.00	£12.84	14.39%
Local Government Employees	£13.56	£10.97	19.13%
Teachers	£21.44	£20.33	5.16%
Chief Officers	£43.56	£0	-

Grade	Gender Pay Gap	Proportion of Women
Scottish Local Government Living Wage	0%	89%
Grade C	0%	86%
Grade D	1%	84%
Grade E	1%	83%
Grade F	1%	68%
Grade G	-1%	54%
Grade H	2%	69%
Grade I	1%	51%
Grade J	1%	49%
Grade K	4%	33%
Grade L	-	0%
Grade M	1%	40%
Chief Officers	-	0%
Teacher	0%	84%
Chartered Teacher	1%	80%
Head Teacher/DHT	4%	76%
Principal Teachers	5%	72%

3.4 Equal Opportunity - Reduce levels of occupational segregation

The data on the previous page shows that 'female' jobs such as care, cleaning, catering and admin/clerical are occupied by women and that 'male' jobs such as cleansing and technical jobs are occupied by male employees. It is clear that there is occupational segregation within the Comhairle.

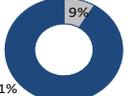
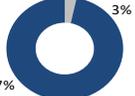
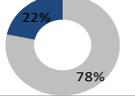
The Comhairle has applied an analytical job evaluation scheme, which is agreed nationally, to assess the relative 'worth' of all local government jobs. The job evaluation scheme has recently been updated in line with legislative developments and continues to be monitored and applied using best practice.

Tackling occupational segregation is a significant challenge given the complexity of the issue with external factors such as gender stereotyping from birth; career choices through school/vocational education; availability of child care etc. which all have an impact, as well as employment factors such as opportunities for flexible working.

3.5 Equal Opportunity - Increase the number of females in the top 2%, 5% and 10% of earners

The percentage of female Comhairle employees who are in the top 2%, 5% and 10% of earners is detailed below. The percentages are all moving in a positive direction. The Comhairle will continue to measure the data set over the 3 percentage points. The Job Evaluation pay grading model continues to be applied consistently to ensure that employees are paid for work of equal value.

As at 31 Dec 20	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total number of contracted council employees (minus 0 hours employees)	1634	1701	1614	1758
Total number of contracted council employees in top 2% of earners	33	34	32	36
Total number of female council employees in top 2% of earners	7	10	7	10
Percentage of female council employees in top 2% of earners	21%	29%	22%	28%
Total number of contracted council employees in top 5% of earners	82	85	80	141
Total number of female council employees in top 5% of earners	31	39	37	74
Percentage of female council employees in top 5% of earners	38%	45%	46%	52%
Total number of contracted council employees in top 10% of earners	163	170	160	187
Total number of female council employees in top 10% of earners	77	91	89	105
Percentage of female council employees in top 10% of earners	47%	53%	56%	56%

Occupation	Gender Pay Gap	Proportion of occupation which are women
Admin/Clerical	2% Mean	91% 
Care - Adult	5% Mean	97% 
Catering	7% Mean	93% 
Cleaning	1% Mean	89% 
Leisure	14% Mean	55% 
Care - Education	10% Mean	97% 
Professional/Managerial excl. H of S	5% Mean	56% 
Chief Officers	100% Mean - 100% Median	100% 
Technical	1% Mean	22% 
Cleansing	100% Mean - 100% Median	78% 

Equality Outcome 4 - Equal Opportunity to high quality learning and teaching in all education settings to develop skills for lifelong learning and working

4.1 Education and Young People - Equality of access to academic and vocational education choice throughout the authority area improving the life chances of our young people

The Participation Rate measures the percentage of 16-19 year olds participating in education, employment or training. The percentage of ASN pupils participating in 2018/19 exceeds both the National average and the Virtual Comparator.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Percentage of ASN pupils participating	96.70%	92.06%	94.94%	

The following table is based on the achievement of ASN pupils on their exit point from school and shows a drop in those achieving 5+ awards at levels 5 and 6.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Percentage of ASN pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 5	52.53%	61.40%	49.52%	36.36%
Percentage of ASN pupils gaining 5+ awards at level 6	28.28%	28.95%	26.67%	12.50%

All children have access to Gaelic Medium Education (GME) education in each island and in each learning community. GME is available in 22 out of 24 schools. In 2020 57% of pupils enrolled for GME in Primary 1.

4.2 Education and Young People - Young people have the confidence and skills to move on to employment, volunteering, further education or training

E-Sgoil continues to provide equity of experience for children and young people. The e-Sgoil Hub in Cairinis, North Uist, has been set up and is now operational. The Educational Psychology Service has worked in partnership with the Principal Teachers of Learning Support to develop 'Dyslexia: Guidance on Identification, Assessment and Intervention'. The Extended Learning Service delivers a resource to schools, children and families offering educational, social, emotional, and employment support to young people. Activities, training and education with support are also offered depending on the young person's needs.

The Community Learning & Development (CLD) Service promotes and provides opportunities throughout the Western Isles for community based learning and development services to adults and young people where local people are included, participating, achieving and progressing. As per the CLD Plan 2015 – 2018, a range of personal and social education sessions are delivered across schools and communities to increase confidence, skills and self-esteem in young people allowing them to embrace opportunities to further build their skillsets. CLD in partnership with Sport & Health, Schools and Voluntary Groups provide a range of accredited awards that provide young people with transferrable skills to take into further education and the workplace. The Accredited Training Centre works with Comhairle departments to support a wide range of apprenticeships and retraining of staff as teachers. The Sport & Health Team worked with partners in schools and in the voluntary sector to provide opportunities for young people to gain coaching experience in a range of activities.

4.3 Education and Young People - People with literacy and numeracy needs, and those whose first language is not English, have the skills to gain employment and play an active role in their community

Percentage of adults participating in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision achieving one or more of their learning outcomes per annum:

2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
84%	99%	100%	100%

Percentage of adults participating in literacy and numeracy provision achieving one or more of their learning outcomes per annum:

2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
97%	95%	99%	95%

4.4 Education and Young People - Young people with Additional Support Needs can access CLD provision in their area

The percentage of children with additional support needs who have their co-ordinated support plans (CSP) completed and reviewed within statutory timescales was reported as 100% for 2017/18. In quarter three of 2018/19 there was 1 CSP completed within statutory timescales which again was reported as 100%. The Learning support service operates a staged assessment and intervention model to identify, record and meet additional support needs. This includes an annual audit of those needs to determine the allocation of human and material resources to support children and young people in schools. Educational provision and plans for children and young people are reviewed regularly, often within multi-disciplinary (GIRFEC) teams, against set targets for progression and outcomes. The service continues to implement, monitor and review the ASN Complex Learning Needs Action Plan.

4.5 Education and Young People - Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy

For pupils leaving school in June 2020 the percentage achieving levels 4 and 5 in Literacy and Numeracy has dropped and are now below the National average.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Percentage of S4-6 pupils attaining Level 4 in Literacy and Numeracy (exit point from school).	88.71%	90.67%	91.18	88.10
Percentage of S4-6 pupils (ASN) attaining Level 4 in Literacy and Numeracy (exit point from school).	77.78%	85.96%	80.95	76.14
Percentage of S4-6 pupils attaining Level 5 in Literacy and Numeracy (exit point from school).	72.18%	74.63%	61.76	63.10
Percentage of S4-6 pupils (ASN) attaining Level 5 in Literacy and Numeracy (exit point from school).	51.52%	64.04%	49.52	31.82

4.6 Education and Young People - Closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged

The Learning Support Service provides support to schools in order to minimise and close the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged. Evidence based decisions, by administering a range of educational and social assessments, are made to determine the appropriate level of advice and suitable interventions to be put in place. A staged assessment and intervention model of identifying children's needs and the resources required to meet those needs is in place across the authority. An annual ASN audit of children's needs is undertaken to provide data and determine resource allocation to schools.

4.7 Education and Young People - Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing

Trends relating to young people's health and wellbeing remain relatively stable as evidenced below:

	2015/17	2016/18	2017/19	2018/20
Life Expectancy at Birth (Male) (2 year trends)	76.81	77.44	77.84	
Life Expectancy at Birth (Female) (2 year trends)	82.77	82.75	83.39	

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Percentage of Children on P1 Overweight, obese and severely obese combined (clinical)	15.50%	19.80%	17.50%	19.80%
Percentage of Children on P1 obese and severely obese combined (clinical)	6.30%	8.90%	4.90%	7.50%

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Percentage of Developmental Assessments at 27-30 month review with a concern in any Domain	22.30%	18.70%	19.70%	

4.8 Education and Young People - Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver destinations for all young people

The Comhairle's strategy of 'Developing the Young Workforce' (DYW) exists to improve the employability and broader life-chances of all young people in school. Schools are working with young people to develop their self-confidence and enhance local work-based skills required by the economy and with the capacity to maximise the islands' linguistic and cultural opportunities.

All pupils work towards the development of their knowledge, skills, experiences and certification required of a young workforce and locally this is progressed through a Comhairle education / economic skills strategy. This data-driven strategy reflects both labour-market demand and the stated aspirations of young people - and has contributed to among the highest vocational attainment and positive/sustained destinations rates nationally.

Percentage of School Leavers in an Initial Positive Destination:

2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
97.76%	95.59%	98.41%	DNA (LGBF)

Equality Outcome 5 - People in the Western Isles will have equal opportunity to participate in the development of our public services and their views are represented

5.1 Participation and Involvement - Develop a better understanding of the needs and issues faced by individuals belonging to a protected group

The Outer Hebrides LEADER 2014-2020 Programme announced the launch of their unique fund, specifically designed to support Young People. The fund is designed to support projects aimed at supporting young people and youth initiatives. What is unique about this fund is that all decisions on applications are fundamentally decided upon by young people, through LEADER's newly established Youth Local Action Group (Youth LAG). The Youth LAG is a group of young people aged between 14 – 25 years, with responsibility for allocating the £100k Youth Fund.

Community Participation Requests

The Comhairle did not receive any community participation request in 2018. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (“the Act”) aims to enhance community involvement in community planning by a number of means including the creation of new opportunities for influencing public service provision and decision-making. The spirit of the Act is one of improving outcomes for communities, encouraging and promoting dialogue, tackling inequalities, and supporting the increased participation of those whose voices are less heard or who face additional barriers.

Part 3 of the Act (Participation Requests) is focused on extending and improving community participation in improving outcomes for communities. The Act enables communities to request to participate in decisions and processes which are aimed at improving outcomes. Under section 22 of the Act a community participation body may make such a request to a public service authority to permit the body to participate in an outcome improvement process.

5.2 Participation and Involvement - Explore opportunities for involving females in the shaping of our public services

Following the Local Government elections in May 2017, no female members were elected. It had been suggested that co-opting female representatives to Member Officer Working Groups should be explored. There were a number of practical issues with this approach including recruitment, ensuring political balance, establishing a code of conduct and the broad range of change through service transformation which the Comhairle has embarked upon. Subsequent discussions with representatives of women's groups indicated that work should be done to identify and remove barriers to standing for political office and to seek to encourage participation and engagement. With this in mind the Comhairle has been in discussion with the Parliament Project team.

The Parliament Project is a non-partisan project which seeks to encourage women to stand for political office by providing practical training and support. The Project run workshops across the UK and also facilitate peer circles to enable women interested in entering politics to connect and share experiences. The Comhairle arranged for the Parliament Project to hold workshops in Stornoway and Benbecula on 30/31 May 2019. The Stornoway Workshop was attended by 27 participants with 13 were booked to attend the Workshop in Benbecula. Due to the cancellation of the Stornoway – Benbecula flight on 31 May it was

not possible to proceed with the Benbecula Workshop. In September 2019 a remote link to the Women into Politics event run through the Scottish Parliament was arranged and was attended by 10 women. Following discussion with the participants further workshops will be held in the run up to the Local Government Elections in 2022 in partnership with the Parliament Project. The Comhairle remains committed to strong democratic representation, community engagement and community participation.

5.3 Participation and Involvement - A greater understanding of the challenges facing different groups to improve access to services

The Comhairle is committed to work with communities and others to find ways to protect public services. The 'Community Conversations' are ongoing and primarily focused on a radical programme of Service Redesign. This process of community engagement and empowerment was aimed at identifying those issues that are important to local communities, in addition to investigating ways that could reduce the demand for some services, identify other services that could be more efficiently provided by communities, and agree which services could be changed. Services use online consultations to more readily gain direct feedback from members of the public. In 2019 there were 9 online consultations undertaken with a further 10 undertaken in 2020.

5.4 Participation and Involvement - Ensure our information and services are easily accessible

The Comhairle's has a Customer Service Strategy and Customer Care Standards in place. Customer Services is the first point of contact if individuals wish to pay, book, apply, report or enquire about a wide range of Comhairle services. CnES fully support Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) set out by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). These guidelines aim at ensuring websites are accessible by all users including those with disabilities. All CnES web content complies with or is in the process of being made compliant with the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) 'AA' standard.

5.5 Participation and Involvement - Understand our customers communication needs better

Based on the information received through an internal self-assessment exercise the Scottish Government's consultation approach of "We Asked, You Said, We Did," was adopted to support the gathering of direct and indirect customer comments primarily through surveys and consultations. In 2019 there were 9 online consultations undertaken with a further 10 undertaken in 2020 using this format.

Service users are able to provide compliments, comments, criticisms via an online form. Feedback can also be provided in writing, by telephone or e-mail. Individual Services undertake satisfaction surveys on a regular basis including the Council Tax Section and the Planning Service. During 2018 the Comhairle involved BSL users and those who represent them in the drafting a BSL Plan for 2018-2024. Feedback was gained through an online consultation and a face to face participation event.

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