



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute  
Valuation Joint Board*

# Public Sector Equality Duty

## Mainstreaming Equality

April 2025

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board (“The Board”) is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities and this report is the basis of that commitment and part of The Board’s wider equal opportunities actions.
- 1.2 This report is the backbone of a positive equal opportunities agenda which includes the promotion of equality by the Board within Argyll & Bute, and East and West Dunbartonshire. The Board is fully committed to embracing and implementing the principles and ethos of the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.
- 1.3 The Board’s performance in relation to the proposals contained in this report will be monitored and audited, and progress reported to elected members of the Board and to the citizens of Argyll & Bute and East and West Dunbartonshire.
- 1.4 The Board will provide to all Stakeholders and to its own staff, a service provision, culture and working environment which is free from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Where all members of our community have equal opportunities and treat each other with dignity and respect.
- 1.5 The Board has a workforce of approximately 50 employees and operates flexible working arrangements (including hybrid working).

## 2. The Board

- 2.1 The Board was established as part of the 1996 reorganisation of local government in terms of The Valuation Joint Boards (Scotland) Order 1995, and is vested with the functions of the three valuation authorities (Argyll & Bute, East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire Councils) in the former Strathclyde Region. With the agreement of the three councils the Board also has responsibility for the Electoral Registration function. The Board has therefore appointed the Assessor to be the Electoral Registration Officer and to be responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the Register of Electors.
- 2.2 The Board comprises 16 members who are appointed by the three council’s with the Argyll & Bute Council and West Dunbartonshire Council each nominating 5 members and East Dunbartonshire Council 6 members.
- 2.3 As a relatively small organisation with limited direct contact with service users, the relevance of some aspects of the Public Sector Equality Duty

is narrower in scope. However, we are committed to embedding equality in our policies, decision-making and service delivery. We take a proportionate approach to meeting our responsibilities, ensuring that equality considerations are part of how we support our workforce and serve the people of Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute.

### 3. The Board's Mission and Vision

#### **Who we are**

Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board is an independent local government body which was established by The Valuation Joint Boards (Scotland) Order 1995.

#### **What we do**

We professionally compile and maintain the Valuation Rolls, Council Tax Valuation Lists and Registers of Electors for the Argyll & Bute, East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire council areas.

#### **Our aims**

Building on our established professionalism, we aim to provide high quality, transparent and effective services to all of our stakeholders.

#### **Our commitments**

Within the constraints of the continuing tight public finance regime, we are committed to:

- Consulting our stakeholders, and listening to their views.
- Valuing staff and providing them with opportunities to develop and contribute.
- Reacting innovatively to change.
- Encouraging innovation within the organisation.
- Treating all stakeholders in a fair and consistent manner.
- Striving for continuous improvement in all aspects of service delivery, whilst maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost.
- Ensuring that we are accountable to stakeholders.
- Pro-actively planning workloads and deploying resources efficiently.
- Using language which is easy to understand.
- Working with our partners in the Scottish Assessors' Association to ensure transparency and Scotland-wide consistency of approach to service delivery.
- Using and caring for the data we hold in an appropriate way.

## 4. Statutory Background

- 4.1 As a public body, The Board must meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.
- 4.2 The PSED requires The Board to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and
  - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 4.3 The specific duties requires that The Board:
- **Report on mainstreaming the equality duty** – we must publish a report every two years showing how equality is being embedded across our functions.
  - **Publish equality outcomes** – we must set and publish equality outcomes every four years and report on progress every two years.
  - **Assess and review policies and practices** – we must assess the impact of applying proposed new or revised policies and practices on people with protected characteristics.
  - **Gather and use employee information** – we must collect and use information on the composition, recruitment, development and retention of our workforce by protected characteristic.
  - **Publish gender pay gap information** – we must publish the difference in average hourly pay between men and women in our organisation every two years.
  - **Publish statements on equal pay** – every four years, we must publish an equal pay statement, including information on occupational segregation by gender, disability and race.
  - **Consider award criteria and conditions in public procurement** – when procuring goods and services, we must consider how we can act to enable the award to better contribute to meeting the equality duty.
  - **Publish in an accessible manner** – we must ensure that all published equality information is accessible to the public.
- 4.4 This report has been developed to meet our statutory duties and to demonstrate our commitment to advancing equality and improving outcomes for our communities and staff. It includes evidence of the progress we have made and the actions we are taking to promote equality.
- 4.5 Public authorities in Scotland are required to publish a Mainstreaming Report and a set of Equality Outcomes bi-annually and to refresh equality

outcomes every four years.

- 4.6 We have now come to the end of our current four-year cycle of equality outcomes and have developed a new set to guide our work over the next cycle. These new outcomes have been informed by staff and stakeholder engagement, and our learning from the past four years.

## 5. Mainstreaming Equality

- 5.1 Mainstreaming equality is about ensuring that we pay due regard to the PSED. This means thinking about how our decisions, policies and practices affect people with protected characteristics, and considering this from the outset - not as an afterthought. It involves being able to demonstrate that equality has been considered in a meaningful and proportionate way as part of our day to day work, both in service delivery and in our role as an employer.

### 5.2 Mainstreaming as an employer

- 5.2.1 We aim to create a working environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and where equality is promoted through our recruitment, development and day-to-day management practices. This section outlines how we are mainstreaming equality across our employment policies and workforce activity.
- 5.2.2 The Equality Impact Assessment carried out on behalf of Unison following the completion of the Pay Modernisation processes for the Board's staff states "On the basis of the information supplied, the new pay scheme is consistent with the principles of equal pay for work of equal value. It reduces the overall pay gap and removes any significant pay gap for work rated as equivalent.
- 5.2.3 The Board will not implement conditions of employment restricting staff from making public what they are paid when attempting to identify discrimination.
- 5.2.4 Prior to the 2010 legislation, 'positive action' was permitted to allow employers to encourage applications for employment from under-represented groups. Positive action does not mean positive discrimination. Recruitment or promotion must still be based on merit. A person cannot be appointed just because he or she possesses a protected characteristic. That would be positive discrimination, which continues to be unlawful in the UK.

- 5.2.5 Through its **Recruitment and Selection Policy**, the Board operates a scheme that guarantees an interview where an applicant has declared having a disability and they have the minimum requirements for the post. The Board will take proportionate measures to overcome any perceived disadvantage or to meet specific needs for a person with a protected characteristic, much along the lines of providing facilities for disabled persons.
- 5.2.6 The policy assists us in eliminating discrimination by setting out fair and objective recruitment processes, and by requiring all selection decisions to be based on merit. It advances equality by encouraging applications from a broad and diverse pool of candidates and by removing barriers in job design, advertising and shortlisting. It also fosters good relations by promoting a culture of fairness and transparency in how new staff are brought into the organisation.
- 5.2.7 Our **Disciplinary Policy and Procedure** helps eliminate discrimination by ensuring that disciplinary processes are applied fairly, transparently and consistently, regardless of protected characteristics. It acknowledges that behaviour may be influenced by health conditions, disabilities or other personal circumstances, and encourages managers to consider these factors before formal action is taken. By requiring evidence-based decision-making and offering support where appropriate, the policy helps advance equality of opportunity and reduce the risk of unfair treatment.
- 5.2.8 The Boards **Flexible Working Policy** supports all three elements of the PSED. It provides a formal route for employees to request adjustments to their working hours or patterns, helping to remove barriers faced by those with disabilities, caring responsibilities, or religious commitments. By promoting a consistent and fair approach to requests, the policy helps eliminate discrimination. It also fosters good relations by supporting work-life balance and demonstrating that the organisation values flexibility and inclusion.
- 5.2.9 Having a **Grievance Policy** provides a structured process for employees to raise concerns about bullying, discrimination or other unfair treatment. It plays a key role in eliminating unlawful discrimination by encouraging staff to speak up and by setting out clear expectations for how complaints will be handled. It also fosters good relations in the workplace by reinforcing a culture of dignity, respect and early resolution, which helps to build trust among colleagues.
- 5.2.10 In having **Driving at Work and Lone Working Policies**, the Board helps advance equality of opportunity by recognising that lone working or remote arrangements may pose different risks for different employees, depending on their sex, disability, or other characteristics. It advises managers to consider individual needs when making risk assessments, and to involve staff in planning safe ways of working. By doing so, it helps eliminate disadvantage and promotes fair access to flexible or mobile working arrangements.

- 5.2.11 These protections are further strengthened by the Boards **Health and Safety Policy**, which supports the PSED by ensuring that health and safety arrangements are inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of staff. The policy acknowledges that risks may affect individuals differently — for example, due to disability, pregnancy or age — and promotes adjustments to remove barriers where needed. In doing so, it advances equality of opportunity and helps create a safe working environment where all staff feel supported and valued.
- 5.2.12 Through our **Dignity at Work Policy**, it is made clear that all forms of harassment based on protected characteristics are unacceptable. Steps for reporting, investigating and responding to incidents are provided. This advances equality by creating a safer environment for all staff, especially those from underrepresented or marginalised groups, and fosters good relations by setting expectations for respectful behaviour and inclusion at work.
- 5.2.13 Having a **Stress in the Workplace Policy** helps eliminate discrimination by encouraging early recognition and support for employees experiencing stress, including those whose mental health may be affected by discrimination or disadvantage. It advances equality by promoting reasonable adjustments and by recognising that stress can affect individuals differently depending on their personal circumstances. It also fosters good relations by creating a culture where wellbeing is prioritised and openly discussed, helping to reduce stigma and build a supportive workplace.
- 5.2.14 In introducing a **Reference Policy**, the Board ensures that all formal employment references are provided through a consistent process, helping to eliminate bias or differential treatment. By requiring management approval and clear separation of personal references from the organisation's endorsement, the policy safeguards against unfair or discriminatory information being shared. This promotes fairness and transparency, which helps build good relations among staff.
- 5.2.15 As part of the Boards **Mandatory Training**, all staff undergo training in **Equality and Diversity**, and our **Equality Duties**. This ensures that everyone in the organisation understands their responsibilities and the standards of behaviour expected in the workplace.
- 5.2.16 A **Statement of Commitment to Equality** is included in **Staff Induction** packs. All new staff, through the induction procedures, are made aware of all relevant Equality issues and retraining of all staff takes place when required.
- 5.2.17 The Board have a number of 'family friendly' policies, including **Adoption Leave Scheme, Carers Leave Scheme, Family Leave Policy, Maternity Leave Scheme, Parental Leave Scheme**, and a **Special Leave Scheme**. Together, these catering to the diverse needs of employees at

different life stages, ensuring equality of opportunity. Use of the Board's **Special Leave Scheme** can also enhance the options available to all staff.

5.2.18 Having policies to assist employees and managers in managing and responding to periods of illness, result in a level playing field for all employees. The Board has a **Wellbeing Support Policy**, a **Disability Leave Scheme**, and a **Cancer Support Policy**.

### 5.3 Mainstreaming equality in Service Provision

5.3.1 The Board aims to ensure that all its services are accessible and inclusive for all stakeholders.

5.3.2 The Boards **website** was subject to an **Accessibility Audit** in July 2024, assessing the site against the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2.

5.3.3 The resultant recommendations arising from the audit have been implemented

5.3.4 Key features of the website include:

- Compatibility with screen readers and assistive technologies
- Options to navigate using keyboard-only controls
- Text that can be resized without loss of content or functionality
- Clear language and structure to aid understanding

5.3.5 The Board encourages feedback on any accessibility issues and provides contact details for users to request information in different formats or report problems.

5.3.6 By having a **Complaints Handling Procedure** based on the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman model, ensures that complaints are dealt with fairly, promptly and transparently. It helps eliminate discrimination by providing clear, accessible routes for raising concerns, including those related to unfair treatment or equality issues. The procedures support equality of opportunity by offering flexible options for how complaints can be made (e.g. in person, by phone, or in writing), and by allowing for reasonable adjustments where needed. It fosters good relations by encouraging early resolution, respectful communication, and organisational learning from complaints to improve services and prevent recurrence.

5.3.7 All complaints are logged, including informal and resolved complaints. Regular reports are provided to the Management Team. This supports transparency and helps identify any trends or equality-related issues over time. It advances equality of opportunity by making sure complaints are not overlooked due to how they were received (e.g. by phone or email),

and it helps eliminate discrimination by ensuring that concerns raised by underrepresented groups are captured and acted upon.

- 5.3.8 Our **Unacceptable Actions Policy** ensures that while staff are protected from abusive or unreasonable behaviour, service users are still able to raise legitimate concerns, including those relating to equality. It balances the need for a respectful workplace with the right of individuals to be heard, helping to eliminate discrimination and promote fair access to complaints processes. The policy applies consistent criteria to managing challenging interactions, avoiding arbitrary restrictions that could affect certain groups unfairly.
- 5.3.9 The Board issues invitations to complete **Customer Satisfaction Questionnaires**, which are statistically analysed to allow an annual report on stakeholder opinions on the service provided. This customer consultation examines the returns from all persons with, and without, protected characteristics and will continue to be used to identify where inequality exists in service provision or where positive actions are required in respect of any of the protected characteristics.
- 5.3.10 Continuous assessments are made of the Board's **Office Premises** and access to services are maintained, although access to the upper floors of our buildings are not possible for all users with mobility issues. Provision has been made to allow all services to be provided on the ground floors.
- 5.3.11 The Board has contracted with a translation service, to provide translations whenever necessary and staff are retrained annually on its application.
- 5.3.12 Those publications made on paper can generally also be made available, on request, in different languages, in Braille, audio tapes and other similar mediums. Most forms issued provide details of how to obtain these alternative formats.

## 6. Gathering and Reviewing Staff Data

- 6.1 The Board is required to gather and use information on the composition of our workforce across the protected characteristics. This helps us to understand the profile of our staff, identify any potential inequalities, and take action to ensure fair and inclusive employment practices. We use this information to inform decision-making, support policy development, and monitor the impact of our work as an employer. By collecting and analysing workforce data, we aim to ensure that our workplace is inclusive, equitable and reflective of the communities we serve.

6.2 Information is gathered through a confidential monitoring questionnaire, issued to all staff every two years. We will review the equality data we collect from our workforce, with particular reference to recent guidance issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The aim is to ensure that the data we gather is relevant, proportionate, and meaningful. Improving the quality of our data will support more effective workforce analysis and enable us to identify and take action to address any disparities. The analysis that follows is based upon the responses received in the last return period.

6.3 The **Age Profile** of staff is shown below. The analysis shows a good spread of age.

Age Range	Total
18-21	2%
22-30	20%
31-40	17%
41-50	24%
51-60	32%
61-65	5%

6.4 The data shows that 15% of our staff have identified as having a **disability**.

Identify as having a disability	Total
Yes	15%
No	82%
Prefer Not to Say	3%

6.5 The workforce is made up of 63% women, and 37% men.

6.6 Of those, the following **sexual orientations** were reported:

Sexual Orientation	Total
Bisexual	5%
Gay or Lesbian	5%
Heterosexual	90%

6.7 **Religious beliefs** were reported as follows:

Religion	Total
Church of Scotland	29%
Roman Catholic	17%
Other Christian	5%
None	49%

- 6.8 100% of the workforce who responded to the survey by identifying their Ethnicity as White.
- 6.9 43% of the respondents are in a Marriage or Civil Partnership. 12% report as being divorced, and 44% having never been in a marriage or civil partnership.
- 6.10 Of the respondents, 90% do not have Caring Responsibilities. 10% responded to say that they have a role as a carer.

**7. Gender Pay Gap Reporting**

- 7.1 The Board have 33 female employees with an average hourly rate of pay of £17.92 (median £15.05). There are 18 male employees, with an average hourly pay rate of £23.91 (median £19.87).
- 7.2 The mean (average) gender pay gap is therefore:  $(23.91 - 17.92) / 23.91 \times 100 = 25.05\%$  favourably to males (19% in 2023, 33% in 2021).
- 7.3 The Board has a relatively small number of staff and the gender pay gap can be significantly impacted through small changes in the profile of the workforce.
- 7.4 The following table charts the pay gap by Grade, and shows that in 7 grades, the pay gap is favourable to females, with only three grades favourable to males

Grade	F	M	Grand Total
01	0.00%	1.96%	1.96%
03	17.65%	11.76%	29.41%
04	15.69%	0.00%	15.69%
05	7.84%	1.96%	9.80%
06	9.80%	7.84%	17.65%
07	1.96%	0.00%	1.96%
08	1.96%	1.96%	3.92%
09	1.96%	5.88%	7.84%
10	1.96%	0.00%	1.96%
11	3.92%	1.96%	5.88%
CO	0.00%	3.92%	3.92%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>62.75%</b>	<b>37.25%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

## 8. Equal Pay Statement

- 8.1 The Board is committed to the principle of equal opportunities for all, and to ensure that employees are not discriminated against, regardless of age, race, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender or contractual status.
- 8.2 As an employer, the Board will continuously strive to treat all staff equally as individuals, free from any prejudice or other bias, and will take action to eliminate any form of discrimination it encounters.
- 8.3 As part of this principle, all employees should receive equal pay for the same or broadly similar work, for work rated as equivalent, and for work of equal value.
- 8.4 The Board operate a pay and benefits system which is transparent, based on objective criteria, and free from bias.
- 8.5 In support of this commitment to equality in pay, the Board will:
- examine existing and future pay practices for all employees to ensure that they comply with best equal pay practice and most current legislation
  - carry out regular monitoring of the impact of these practices
  - inform employees of how these practices work and how their pay and benefits are arrived at
  - provide training and guidance for those involved in making decisions about pay and benefits
  - consult on all changes to pay policy with trade union representatives
- 8.6 Through these actions, the Board will aim to avoid unfair discrimination in its pay and benefits system and reward fairly the skills, knowledge and competences of all employees.

## 9. Equality in Procurement Activities

- 9.1 The Board uses the Scottish Government's national procurement frameworks, which are designed to ensure that public procurement is open, fair, and delivers value for money. They also support public bodies to meet legal obligations under the PSED. Equality and sustainability considerations are built into the frameworks and supporting guidance, helping public bodies to embed equality consistently and proportionately across all stages of the procurement process.

- 9.2 When using these frameworks, we follow national best practice by:
- considering equality risks and opportunities when defining our requirements,
  - using standardised documentation that includes prompts to address equality where relevant,
  - selecting suppliers who demonstrate compliance with equality legislation and good practice, and
  - managing contracts in a way that supports inclusive service delivery and fair treatment of workers.

## 10. 2025 – 2029 Outcomes

- 10.1 The Board aims to create an equal, diverse and inclusive workplace, by supporting and promoting fairness and equality via our:
- Recruitment and Selection policy and practice
  - Extensive range of family friendly personnel policies
  - Our Dignity at work principles
  - Our policies to ensure the safe and fair treatment of all employees
  - Training and Development processes
  - Equal Pay and Benefits
  - Leadership and staff communications
- 10.2 The Board will continue to invest in our workforce for the future, ensuring equality of opportunity for all posts (including, but not limited to trainee posts).
- 10.3 To continue to identify any instances of discrimination or inequality in service provision, by regular monitoring of customer satisfaction responses, which include optional equalities data to be submitted along with comments.

## 11. Summary

- 10.1 The Board will continue to support mainstreaming equalities throughout the service and monitor progress in relation to the protected characteristics and the specific equality outcomes identified.
- 10.2 The requirements laid upon the Board by the Equalities Act 2010 are regarded with the utmost respect and are used to focus and target elements of service delivery. The Board will endeavour to continue to raise the equalities profile.