

Equally Safe at Work – Achievement of Bronze Accreditation

Report by Gary Fairley, Chief Officer Corporate Solutions

Report for Decision

1 Recommendations

Council is recommended to:-

- (a) Note the recent achievement of the Bronze Accreditation for Equally Safe at Work;
- (b) Confirm its commitment to continuing with the progressive work in this area with a view to advancing to Silver Accreditation within the next two years, recognising the Council's ambition and aspiration to address women's inequality at work and prevent violence against women in the workplace and in wider society; and
- (c) Record its thanks to all those involved in the cross-Council working group, including partner agencies, involved in securing the Bronze Accreditation.

2 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to celebrate the Council's recent achievement of Bronze Accreditation for Equally Safe at Work.

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3 Background

- 3.1** 'Close the Gap' works in Scotland on women's labour market participation. In 2019, Close the Gap developed an Employer Accreditation Programme to support the implementation of the Equally Safe Strategy. Equally Safe critically recognises that gender inequality is a root cause of violence against women and addressing labour market inequality is a necessary step in ending violence against women.

The purpose of the Accreditation Programme is to enable local authorities to demonstrate good practice and show leadership in addressing violence against women, as well as providing the opportunity for employers to make the connection that preventing violence against women starts with advancing gender equality.

Currently, this is the only Employer Accreditation Programme of its kind in the UK focusing on gender equality at work and violence against women at work.

Following an application process, Midlothian Council was successful in becoming one of nine Scottish Local Authorities to participate in the pilot accreditation programme.

4 Bronze Accreditation

- 4.1** A cross-Council working group was established in early 2019 to develop and drive forward an action plan to meet the Bronze Accreditation Standards.

Amongst the many achievements and advancements made as a result of participating in the programme, are the introduction of a zero tolerance Gender Based Violence Policy, a zero tolerance Sexual Harassment Policy and a Safe Leave provision of ten days paid leave for those who are experiencing gender based violence and who need additional time off work to deal with resulting matters. Work is also ongoing to address areas of identified vertical and horizontal occupational segregation. Positive relationships also continue to be strengthened with partners such as Women's Aid and Engender.

- 4.2** On 9 March 2021 Midlothian Council was one of only four Scottish Councils awarded Bronze Accreditation for Equally Safe at Work.

Despite being one of the smaller Councils in Scotland, this accreditation highlights the level of ambition and aspiration within the Council to address women's inequality at work and prevent violence against women in the workplace and in wider society.

- 4.2** The Council's Bronze Accreditation is in place until March 2023. Equally Safe at Work is designed to create sustainable change in workplace practice and Council is asked to commit to continuing with the progressive work in this area with a view to advancing to Silver Accreditation within the next two years.

5 Report Implications (Resource, Digital, Risk and Equalities)

5.1 Resource

There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

5.2 Digital

There are no direct digital implications arising from this report.

5.3 Risk

The Council's successful bronze accreditation sends a strong message to both our staff and our communities regarding the Council's determination to address women's inequality in the labour market.

5.4 Ensuring Equalities

Women still do not enjoy equality with men in Scotland, or in the wider UK. Gender equality shapes women's lives, resulting in their different experiences of employment, their greater propensity to have caring roles, and their greater likelihood of being a survivor of sexual violence. The Equally Safe at Work Accreditation will ensure a continued focus on positive work is undertaken within the Council to address women's inequality in the labour market, prevent violence against women in the workplace and support survivors at work.

5.5 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B - Background Papers/Resource Links (if applicable)

APPENDIX A – Additional Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Midlothian Council and its Community Planning Partners have made a commitment to treat the following areas as key priorities under the Single Midlothian Plan:-

- Reducing the gap in economic circumstances
- Reducing the gap in learning outcomes
- Reducing the gap in health outcomes
- Reducing the impact of climate change

Achieving the Equally Safe at Work Bronze Accreditation will contribute to reducing the gap in health outcomes, learning outcomes and economic circumstances and represents a further welcomed development in addressing women's inequality at work and preventing violence against women in the workplace and in wider society.

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- ☐ Holistic Working
- ☐ Hub and Spoke
- ☐ Modern
- ☐ Sustainable
- ☐ Transformational
- ☒ Preventative
- ☐ Asset-based
- ☐ Continuous Improvement
- ☐ One size fits one
- ☐ None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- ☐ One Council Working with you, for you
- ☒ Preventative and Sustainable
- ☐ Efficient and Modern
- ☐ Innovative and Ambitious

A.4 Delivering Best Value

The report does not directly relate to the delivery of best value.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

A cross-Council working group was established to develop and drive forward the action plan to achieve the Bronze Accreditation standards. The Working Group included trade union colleagues.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

Attaining the Bronze Accreditation will positively impact on the working lives of our workforce.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Attaining the Bronze Accreditation and striving for Silver Accreditation will ensure the Council can continue to work to address women's inequality at work and prevent violence against women in the workplace and wider society.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Attaining the Bronze Accreditation and striving for Silver Accreditation will contribute to addressing inequality at work, positively impacting on our employee's wellbeing and in turn lead to our workforce being able to better support sustainable development.

APPENDIX B**Background Papers/Resource Links (if applicable)**

None