

**To:** Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board

**On:** 8 February 2024

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**Report by:** Director of Finance and Resources

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**Heading:** **People Strategy – Ongoing implementation of key priorities  
(Health and Wellbeing Plan ‘2024 - 2029’; Equality, Diversity and  
Inclusion Plan, and HR&OD Policy Review)**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 As part of the on-going implementation of our People Strategy priorities ‘Our People Our Future 2021-2026’, approved by Members in March 2021, a recent progress report noted by members in September 2023, informed work continues in relation to our key People Strategy priorities, including the new key priorities to be progressed over the next 24 months. This work includes the development of a new Health and Wellbeing Plan, a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan and our ongoing HR&OD Policy Review Plan.
- 1.2 These new Plans and revised HR & OD policies will create the right supportive foundations to ensure they adequately empower and support the level of organisational development and embed the cultural change journey. The policy review has incorporated our values and a has clear focus on flexibility, health and wellbeing, equality, diversity, and inclusiveness.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from members to implement the Plans and the policy attached at Appendices 1 - 3. These include:
- ‘Your Health Matters’ – Health and Wellbeing Plan 2024 – 2029 **(Appendix 1)**
  - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan **(Appendix 2)**
  - Revised Carers Leave Policy **(Appendix 3)**

- 1.4 Consultation has taken place with the Trade Unions and Services and feedback has informed the development of the plans and the policy. These plans and policy have been modernised and compiled in line with best practice, our values and employment legislation.
  - 1.5 Following approval from Members, officers will engage with services to develop bespoke implementation plans ensuring local needs are given priority. These will also be communicated to all managers and employees within the Council via the normal channels.
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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that members:
    - Approve the Plans and revised HR&OD Policy at (Appendices 1 - 3); and;
    - Note that regular progress reports will be provided to the Corporate Management team and annual progress reports will be presented to members.
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## **3. Background**

- 3.1 The Council strives to create a healthy and inclusive working environment which supports all colleagues to better balance their work and home commitments whilst performing to the best of their ability. Employee health, wellbeing and development remains our top priority.
- 3.2 Our major focus over the last 2-3 years has been protecting our colleagues and service users working and living under COVID19 restrictions by ensuring safe working practices were in place to prevent the spread of the virus enabling us to deliver key essential services to our communities.
- 3.3 Over the next 2 years we aim to build on this by placing a much wider and prioritised focus on evolving our culture, by ensuring 'our values' are embedded within everything we do, encourage engagement and improve communication to ensure our colleagues feel valued and informed.
- 3.4 The health and wellbeing of our colleagues, promoting equality, diversity and inclusion through our plans and policies and through management and leadership development programmes are key factors to ensuring the success of our cultural change journey. Work has already begun on these priorities.

3.5 Through our Health and Wellbeing Plan, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan and our People & OD Policies, we will demonstrate care for our people, resulting in an improved employee experience, an overall healthier, more engaged and more productive workforce. Implementing these Plans will help us to ensure that both health and wellbeing and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are central to everything we do, are supported at all levels across the Council, and becomes part of our everyday culture and values.

#### 4. Health and Wellbeing Plan and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan

4.1 **The Health and Wellbeing Plan 2024-2029**, attached at **Appendix 1**, builds on and complements previous plans and sets out our vision for employee health and wellbeing, the key themes we will focus on, how we will do it, and how we will measure success. It aligns to the Renfrewshire Council Plan 2022–2027 “Creating a fairer Renfrewshire built on innovation, wellbeing and opportunity” and our People Strategy, which identifies “the health and wellbeing of our staff” as our number one priority, supporting our colleagues post pandemic and is a key factor in evolving our culture.

4.2 Our vision is simple, we want to provide a ‘safe, healthy, and inclusive workplace’ that recognises people are individuals with different life experiences and needs that may impact on our Physical, Mental, Social and Financial wellbeing. And when help or support is required, we will be there to do everything we can. The Plan outlines how we will achieve our vision.

4.3 Our Plan will focus on 4 key themes, which are summarised below. Specific activities under each theme are detailed in **Appendix 1** for members.

- **Mental Wellbeing** - We will encourage our colleagues to seek support should they need it and provide bespoke service led interventions to support our colleagues’ mental health through ensuring trained Mental Health First Aiders, Occupational Health and our Employee Assistance Provider are regularly communicated and signposted for everyone to access when required.
- **Physical Wellbeing** - We will evolve our culture to empower our colleagues’ knowledge on safe systems at work, processes, and will deliver campaigns to support physical well-being and promote self-care and awareness. We will also provide training on statutory areas and appropriate workplace health surveillance and risk assessment processes.
- **Social Wellbeing** - By promoting and living our values, providing strong leadership, and nurturing supportive relationships across the Council, we will encourage a sense of community, promote collaborative working, recognise and reward our colleagues for the excellent work they do and encourage groups to share values, interests and experiences at work.

- **Financial Wellbeing** - We will promote and signpost colleagues to our employee benefits and discount schemes, impartial finance advice sessions, Advice Works and deliver training on money management and financial awareness with greater focus on our frontline service colleagues. We will also review and provide a new package of terms and conditions, applying fair pay and continue to address gender and ethnicity pay gaps.
- 4.4 Our approach will ensure we will focus on early intervention, evolve a wellbeing culture through use of people analytics to understand how effective the supports, approaches and interventions we are providing are. We will continue to develop our leaders and managers as wellbeing leaders, who can engage colleagues, be role models who can build strong working relationships, offering guidance and show compassion during difficult times and understand how this can positively impact on performance, development, and health and safety.
- 4.5 We will empower our people to take a greater responsibility for their own health and wellbeing through more self-care interventions, providing a better understanding of what health and wellbeing means to them.
- 4.6 The People & OD service will take overall responsibility for the delivery of this Plan, focusing on the 4 themes as detailed in section 4.3 of this report. The team will oversee progress, working with services to provide regular updates to the Council's Corporate Management Team, Elected Members, and Trade Unions.
- 4.7 **The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan**, attached at **Appendix 2** was driven by feedback received following a council wide survey and supports our five-year inclusion plan and sets out our goal to create an environment where everyone can feel valued and can thrive, regardless of their personal characteristics or circumstances.
- 4.8 Building on the response to the challenges COVID19 presented, we recognise that being an inclusive employer means to continually assess what more we can do to ensure the safety, wellbeing and happiness of our people.
- 4.9 This Plan provides an overview of current good practice and also sets out a framework for areas for development. The areas for development are:
- **Communication** – We will implement an inclusion and diversity communications plan to establish authentic and robust communication that will reach all parts of the Council. We will improve communication through establishing further focus groups, particularly for our people who work on the frontline will ensure 'our values' are embedded within everything we do, encourage engagement where our people feel valued and informed.

- **Policies** – Our new and revised HR & OD policies will create the right supportive foundations to ensure they adequately empower and support the level of organisational and cultural change required. This ongoing policy review has incorporated our values and has a clear focus on flexibility, health and wellbeing, equality, diversity, and inclusiveness.
- **Diversity of Cultures & Ethnicity** – We will continue with the work we have undertaken over the years to ensure our staff are all trained in equality, diversity and inclusion, raising awareness and including an understanding of diversity of cultures and ethnicity.
- **Recruitment and Progression** – We will continue to train all of our people involved in recruitment, focusing particularly on eradicating barriers to attracting a diverse range of people into the Council. Existing Recruitment and Selection training includes exercises on unconscious bias and discrimination.
- **Equality Impact Assessments** – We will introduce a new Equality Impact Assessment process and toolkit to ensure inclusion of all our people becomes second nature across everything we are planning.

## 5. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Outcomes

5.1 Achievement of the priorities detailed within the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan will ensure we can achieve the following 3 outcomes contained in the Plan. These outcomes are:

- **Immediate Priorities – the brilliant basics of inclusion** – this has 3 aims which are: Refreshed approach to learning; Focus on LGBTQ+ Inclusion; and Becoming anti-racist.
- **Next steps of inclusion – enhancing the colleague experience** – this has 3 aims which are: Events that add value; Authentic and accessible communications; and Data that makes a difference.
- **Sector-leading inclusion – becoming the best place for people to work** – this has 2 aims which are: Adopting an inclusive approach to recruitment and progression; and Continuous policy development.

5.2 The People & OD service will take overall responsibility for the delivery of this Plan, focussing on the 3 outcomes summarised in section 5.1 of this report. The team will oversee progress, working with services to provide regular updates to the Council's Corporate Management Team, Elected Members, Trade Unions and will be included within the Equalities Mainstreaming Report.

## 6. Revised HR&OD Policies

- 6.1 **Revised Carers Leave Policy** - The revised Carers Leave Policy, attached at **Appendix 3**, replaces the previous 2018 policy and supports the Council's Health and Wellbeing Plan and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan, by raising awareness of unpaid working carers responsibilities, providing support and enabling our people to balance these caring responsibilities with work.
- 6.2 The Policy provides a definition of a carer, under the Carers Rights Bill 2023 and outlines our commitment to provide a range of supports that include our successful Carers Connected Support Network, up to 5 days' paid Carers Leave, online resources for our people and managers and signposting to local and national carer support organisations.
- 6.3 The key changes in the policy are:
- The definition of a primary carer has been updated in line with legislation.
  - We have removed the 26 weeks continuous service eligibility criteria to enable carers to receive support from day 1 of their employment.
  - We have expanded the types of evidence that will be considered to support carer applications.
  - We have expanded the reasons for which a carer may be able to take paid carers leave, supporting physical and emotional wellbeing.
  - We have simplified the registration and application process to remove barriers and be more inclusive.
- 6.4 Following analysis of our carers leave data and benchmarking information, Members are asked to note that we seek approval to retain the paid provision of 5 days' carers leave as a minimum.
- 6.5 The Council now has achieved the highest level of accreditation from Carer Positive, where we are considered to be an exemplary employer for having a working environment where carers feel valued and supported.

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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - The Council's ongoing financial sustainability is dependent on the ability of the Council to transform and modernise services using a healthy and resilient workforce.
2. **People & Organisational Development** - As outlined in the report.
3. **Community Planning** – None.
4. **Legal** – These plans and policy have been prepared in accordance with current employment legislation and statutory provisions.

5. **Property/Assets – None**
6. **Information Technology – None.**
7. **Equality & Human Rights**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health & Safety - As outlined in the report.**
9. **Procurement – None.**
10. **Risk – None.**
11. **Privacy Impact – None.**
12. **Cosla Policy Position – None.**
13. **Climate Risk – None.**

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### **List of Background Papers**

None

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# Health and Wellbeing Plan

For all council employees



Renfrewshire  
Council



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## **Message from our Chief Executive, Alan Russell**

The health and wellbeing of all council colleagues is one of my key priorities.

Our employees are at the heart of everything we do, and at Renfrewshire Council we are committed to providing support to our staff when they need it, and to create a culture that helps all our employees to maintain good health and wellbeing.

I'm aware of the impact of the last few years, not only on our health, but our wellbeing, and as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, and the current cost-of-living crisis, continuing to invest in the health and wellbeing of everyone who lives and works here in Renfrewshire, is a key council priority.

We know that we have more work to do, and 'Your Health Matters' our new Health and Wellbeing Plan sets out the areas we will focus on over the next five years.

Developed in consultation with our colleagues and Trade Unions it takes a whole council approach which includes both the provision of appropriate accessible services and interventions; and a commitment to create working environments that help us to achieve and sustain good health and wellbeing.

I recognise that the needs and expectations of our people and communities continue to change, that's why I believe it's so important that we continue to invest in the wellbeing and development of our people, to respond to future challenges, and deliver the Council's vision for Renfrewshire.

### **Alan Russell, Chief Executive**



## **1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 Our new Health and Wellbeing Plan 2024-2029 sets out our vision for employee wellbeing, the key themes we will focus on, how we will do it, and how we will measure success. It aligns to our Renfrewshire Council Plan 2022–2027 “Creating a fairer Renfrewshire built on innovation, wellbeing and opportunity” and our People Strategy “Our People Our Future 2021-2026”. This Plan builds on the progress made within the previous Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-22.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 Over the years, we have invested significantly on safe systems at work, policies and processes, training and awareness campaigns to help our people maintain their wellbeing and to promote self-care. The health and wellbeing of all our people remains our number one priority as highlighted in our Council Plan, People Strategy, and progress reports to our Trade Unions, Corporate Management Team and Finance Resources and Customer Services Policy Board.
- 2.2 The Council Plan 2022–2027 outlines “caring for the health and wellbeing of all our workforce, supporting us to work well and deliver great services” as one of our priorities for living our values and making a difference together, whilst Our People Strategy 2021-2026 identifies “the health and wellbeing of our staff” as our number one priority, supporting our colleagues post pandemic and is a key factor in evolving our culture.
- 2.3 The last four years have without doubt been one of the most challenging times in our history. During the pandemic, our focus was on protecting our colleagues by ensuring safe working practices were in place to prevent the spread of the virus and enabled us to deliver key essential services to our communities. The recent rise in the cost of living is clearly continuing to have an adverse impact on our peoples’ mental health. We are placing much wider focus on wellbeing by progressing activities to support and improve our colleagues’ physical, mental, social and financial health and wellbeing.
- 2.4 Renfrewshire has pockets of high levels of deprivation compared to the Sottish average for key wellbeing factors such as health and income. Around 70% of our large, diverse workforce are resident in the area, and the steps we take now to support the health and wellbeing of our colleagues is likely to have a positive impact on our culture, benefit our local communities, and enable us to continue delivering on our key priorities for Renfrewshire.
- 2.5 This Plan will help us to ensure that health and wellbeing is central to everything we do, is supported at all levels across the Council, and becomes embedded into our culture, values and performance. We know our culture, values, communication and engagement, management styles, individual behaviours, and the support and resources we provide all impact on our colleagues’ health and wellbeing, and therefore in partnership with our trade union colleagues and wider stakeholders, we have identified four areas to focus on which include mental, physical, social and financial wellbeing.

### **3 Health and Wellbeing Vision**

3.1 Our vision is simple, we want to provide a 'safe, healthy, and inclusive workplace' that recognises people are individuals with different life experiences and needs that may impact on our Physical, Mental, Social and Financial wellbeing. And when help or support is required, we will be there to do everything we can.

3.2 We will place health and wellbeing at the centre of everything we do, empower our people to make positive, well-informed health and wellbeing choices promoting self-care, whilst providing better access to a range of support provisions in place.

3.3 To achieve this vision, we will:

- Embed our programme of health and wellbeing across all our priorities and ensure our people take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing as far as is reasonably practicable.
- Work with key stakeholders and trade union colleagues to improve our communication channels to provide and promote health and wellbeing supports that are inclusive and accessible to everyone.
- Recognise some colleagues may have experienced trauma and support health and wellbeing in a trauma-informed way, which can assist with healing and recovery.
- Provide necessary training and awareness to maintain their health and wellbeing and signposting to a range of self-help supports.
- Support improvements in attendance levels encouraging earlier returns to work, where possible.

### **4 Health and Wellbeing Themes**

4.1 Our Health and Wellbeing Plan will focus on four key themes of integrated health and wellbeing. These are:

#### **4.2 Mental Wellbeing**

- We will use our workforce data to better understand the level and the impacts of mental health across the Council.
- We will provide training to managers to enable them to recognise the signs of mental health and provide immediate, necessary supports.
- We will train our people to recognise the signs and impacts that mental health can have on them and provide access to a range of self-help supports to better manage their psychological wellbeing and develop personal resilience.
- We will ensure our people receive help at the earliest opportunity through maximising all available supports that Occupational Health, employee counselling, and trained Mental Health First Aiders provide.
- We will train and promote the work of our Mental Health First Aiders to encourage our people to seek help or talk freely and openly about mental health, creating a culture of open discussion around mental health.
- We will review our tools and approaches to stress risk assessments to help managers and our people identify and address work related issues.

### 4.3 **Physical Wellbeing**

- We will use our Managing Absence data to analyse emerging patterns of absence relating to physical workplace activities and put in place a range of interventions to address these.
- We will deliver specific awareness campaigns and initiatives to our people that can have a significant impact on physical wellbeing, including promoting the benefits of regular exercise, healthy eating, etc.
- We will provide training to our people on the benefits of maintaining physical health where possible. This will include signposting to advice, resources and dedicated support made available through our Employee Assistance Providers.
- We will promote the work of our trained and accredited First Aiders, ensuring our people know who to contact in times of emergencies.
- Provide training to our people on the Council's statutory areas, such as Manual Handling, Display Screen Equipment, etc, ensuring workplace health surveillance and risk assessment processes are understood and carried out timeously across services.
- We will ensure that our inclusive and flexible working environment enables our people to make adjustments to their working day or duties, supporting an improvement on their physical wellbeing.

### 4.4 **Social Wellbeing**

- We will promote our values and celebrate those employees who live them every day as great examples.
- We will introduce an employee recognition scheme that will enable us to recognise and reward colleagues for the excellent work they do and support the Council's culture of continuous service improvement.
- We will introduce new employee engagement forums. These forums will provide an opportunity to improve our employee voice and become a more inclusive employer which is a key area for improvement as highlighted in feedback from the EDI staff survey.
- We will explore, through working in collaboration with colleagues from People&OD and the Communications team, new technologies to improve communication with all colleagues, so everyone feels included, valued and informed.
- We will support local community initiatives through engagement on activities such as volunteering to build a sense of belonging and enhance existing strong links.

### 4.5 **Financial Wellbeing**

- We will promote virtual and on-site impartial advice sessions, using the expertise and resources from our Advice Works Team, normalising discussion around money worries to support financial wellbeing.
- We will develop training modules to provide money management/financial awareness on budgeting, saving, ethical loans, pensions and retirement planning, with greater focus on frontline service colleagues.

- We will collaborate with local credit unions and other providers to inform colleagues on financial products and services, offering access through payroll deduction.
- We will provide a new modern and sustainable package of terms and conditions, secure employment contracts, increased flexibility, fair pay and address any gender, ethnicity and disability gaps.
- We will develop, review and promote our employee benefits, salary sacrifice schemes, discounts through collaboration with local businesses, which will also benefit the local community and wellbeing related policies.

## **5 Our approach to successful implementation**

- 5.1 We will implement this Plan by shifting the focus from the previous action-centred “one size fits all” approach, driven corporately, to a more flexible approach, owned by services with bespoke interventions, based on needs year by year, integrated within their service improvement and risk management plans. Successful implementation of this plan is strong leadership, robust governance, working closely with a range of partners and utilising all appropriate resources.
- 5.2 The themes will be delivered over the lifecycle of this Plan, providing services with the flexibility to decide what is the priority for them and what will have the biggest impact in line with their needs and Council priorities.
- 5.3 Investing resource into supporting our peoples’ health needs, with a focus on early intervention, will ensure our people remain our number one priority, critical to delivering ongoing, best value sustainable services to our communities.
- 5.4 We will evolve a wellbeing culture through conducting surveys and use people analytics to understand how effective the supports, approaches and interventions we are providing are, including focused signposting, promoting self-care and awareness.
- 5.5 We will train and support our managers to identify health and wellbeing issues and offer appropriate supports and interventions as and when required. We will continue to develop effective leaders as role models who can engage colleagues, build strong working relationships, are confident with managing health and wellbeing matters and understand how their support can positively impact on performance, development and health and safety.
- 5.6 We will work collaboratively with a range of key stakeholders to deliver on the 4 themes whilst sharing information on best practices to nurture a culture of positive health and wellbeing. This will empower our people to take a greater responsibility for their own health and wellbeing through more self-care interventions, providing a better understanding of what health and wellbeing means to them.
- 5.7 The People & OD service will take overall responsibility for the delivery of this Plan. The team will monitor progress, working with services to provide regular updates to the Elected Members, the Council’s Corporate Management Team, and Trade Unions.

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# Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Plan

For all council employees



Renfrewshire  
Council

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## **1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 Renfrewshire Council have always strived to demonstrate a clear commitment to staff inclusion through our policies, learning and development and culture and work environment. We have recently published the Equality Mainstreaming report that outlines the good progress we have made on equalities outcomes and in particular our strong performance in reducing our gender pay gap.
- 1.2 The Council have worked over the years to ensure our staff are all trained in equality, diversity and inclusion raising awareness and understanding. We already have a zero tolerance for bullying, harassment, discrimination, or victimisation, we have very strong support for Carers within our organisation and have positive workplace policies and practices in place always with our core values at the heart of those.
- 1.3 However, reviewing at our **'Our People Our Future 2021–2026' strategy**, we recognised we needed to make this more of a priority and that we wanted to focus on delivering a great experience for all staff. It was therefore important we asked our staff how they felt about Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion at Renfrewshire Council. As a result, we partnered with subject matter experts in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, Inclusive Employers, who helped us seek views from our staff and helped us analyse the feedback given.
- 1.4 The remainder of this report sets out our plan as a result of this feedback, analysis and review.

## **2 Context for Plan**

- 2.1 At Renfrewshire Council, our goal is to create an environment where everyone can feel valued and can thrive regardless of their personal characteristics or circumstances. As part of our ongoing commitments as an equal opportunities' employer, we partnered with Inclusive Employers in 2023 to conduct a cross-organisational culture review to better understand staff experiences at Renfrewshire Council. The review found pockets of good practice across Renfrewshire Council as well as clear areas for improvement and has provided us with a path forward as we aim to become the best place for people to work. The findings from this review have now been analysed and form the basis of our refreshed approach to inclusion at Renfrewshire Council found within this five-year Inclusion Plan.
- 2.2 In March 2020, our staff quickly adapted and responded to the challenge that COVID19 presented. Essential services adapted and continued throughout lockdown with an incredible compassionate response from staff demonstrating a true commitment to our communities. This demonstrated a clear passion for the work we all do and an eagerness to always be there for each other and the people we serve. Building on this response, we have an opportunity to further enhance our workforce's experience. We know that the world around us is continually evolving and to be an inclusive employer means to continually assess what more we can do to ensure the safety, wellbeing and happiness of everyone working at Renfrewshire Council.

## **3 Our Findings – Good Practice**

### **3.1 Staff from low socio-economic backgrounds**

- 3.2 Data shows us that efforts to improve inclusion of staff from low socio-economic backgrounds is yielding very positive results for Renfrewshire Council. Staff were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences working at Renfrewshire Council and

particularly felt they could be successful by being themselves. They also thought leaders were committed to diversity, inclusion and equality. In addition, out of all demographic groups surveyed, they were the most positive about feeling comfortable sharing their background and cultural experiences with colleagues.

### **3.3 Mental Health Support**

3.4 During the culture review, staff commented on excellent mental health support from Renfrewshire Council during the Covid-19 pandemic. Staff also acknowledged that whilst there may still be room for improvement, there has been an increase in the attention given to inclusion and diversity at Renfrewshire Council. In addition, stakeholder interviews with leaders across the organisation reflected a strong desire to create a positive working environment at Renfrewshire Council.

### **3.5 Women at Renfrewshire Council**

3.6 Another positive area was the experiences of women at Renfrewshire Council. The research demonstrated that women feel positive about working at Renfrewshire Council, particularly in relation to modern apprenticeships which have been received very well. The menopause policy had been well-received and women felt that line managers and HR were reliable sources of support. Overall, responses highlighted a generally positive perception of fairness, respect, and support at Renfrewshire Council, while also acknowledging the need for continued efforts in diversity and inclusion.

### **3.7 Strong Teams**

3.8 Finally, data from the culture review shows us that for many staff at Renfrewshire Council there is a collegiate and supportive atmosphere overall. In the staff survey, the highest scoring questions overall were related to getting help and support from colleagues and staff having belief in their skills in contributing to a diverse and inclusive organisation. Whilst results then vary amongst staff demographics, it is interesting to note that Health and Social Care Partnerships and Chief Executives particularly demonstrate a collegiate atmosphere in their positive responses.

## **4 Our Findings – Areas of Improvement**

4.1 Our Culture Review identified five key themes across all areas of the organisation and we have included a brief breakdown of these below. These key themes have formed the basis of our five-year inclusion plan and associated action plan.

### **4.2 Communication**

4.3 Overall, it was felt that there is a lack of authentic and robust communication which reaches all parts of the organisation when it comes to inclusion and diversity at Renfrewshire Council and that sometimes inclusion and diversity may be seen as a 'tick-box' exercise. It was also felt that there also is a lack of recognition of a diverse range of events in newsletters (notably Pride and Black History Month). Staff also sometimes found it difficult to access the information they needed around inclusive initiatives this led to staff sometimes showing a lack of confidence in diversity and inclusion work. Unfortunately, we also found examples of non-inclusive behaviour toward different staff groups sometimes related to protected characteristics.

### **4.4 Policy Inconsistencies**

4.5 A policy review was completed on a total of 21 policies at Renfrewshire Council as part of our culture review. The policies provided cover a range of the key policies that support line managers with ED&I implementation in the organisation. The review found that policies did not always follow inclusive best practice and were sometimes inconsistent in their writing style and comprehensibility. This was reflected in staff not always feeling confident in reporting any concerns they may have. Some policies were also limited in their scope in relation to diverse communities and did not always provide enough information on wellbeing support for staff. The review also found that there were sometimes inconsistencies in how policies are applied across the organisation and staff wanted more input on how to affect policy change.

#### 4.6 **Diversity of Cultures & Ethnicity**

4.7 Like many large organisations, particularly public-sector organisations, the culture review identified more work that needed to be done to raise awareness and educate our colleagues in the diversity of Cultures and Ethnicity. Staff were not confident in talking about different cultures, different races and ethnicity and we identified concerns from minority-ethnic staff about our approach to addressing their differences therefore making their experience at work less positive. This is an area that we must address and move towards a more diverse and inclusive culture.

#### 4.8 **Recruitment and Progression**

4.9 Across all four sections of our audit at Renfrewshire Council, we identified areas for improvement relating to recruitment and progression which may particularly impact employees from marginalised groups. The review identified potential barriers to attracting a diverse range of employees into the organisation as well as more work needing to be done in mitigating unconscious bias within recruitment and progression. Research also found that our current approach to inclusion and diversity training is not as robust as it could be with some clear gaps in knowledge across Renfrewshire Council.

#### 4.10 **Equality Impact Assessments**

4.11 Underpinning all findings from the culture review was **a clear need for a new Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process** across the organisation. Staff were concerned about a potential disconnect between the experiences of senior leaders and staff across the organisation. The review also found that there was not always consideration of the impact on marginalised groups when making decisions across the organisation.

### 5 **Key Aims and Outcomes**

5.1 Our Inclusion Plan is focussed on three key areas designed to build on each other in fostering an inclusive Renfrewshire Council where everyone can bring their whole selves to work. We aim to be the best place for people to work in the local area and this plan helps us to achieve that.

#### 5.2 **Outcome 1: Immediate Priorities – The Brilliant Basics of Inclusion**

5.3 Over the first 1-2 years of our inclusion plan we will focus on the brilliant basics of inclusion to ensure we are working from a strong foundation which will underpin all future inclusion activities. We will achieve this through three aims:

- **Refreshed approach to learning:** our people need to be equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence to truly understand inclusion and make it an everyday reality at Renfrewshire Council. We will build an inclusion training programme which is accessible to all staff and measure uptake to ensure everyone values the importance of inclusion and are taking an active role building a truly inclusive culture.
- **Focus on LGBTQ+ Inclusion:** we know that LGBTQ+phobia is still prevalent across society and workplaces are no exception to this. We will enact a zero-tolerance approach to all incidents of LGBTQ+phobia at Renfrewshire Council. We will also work on our reporting mechanisms to ensure they are supportive, safe and robust to ensure all potentially LGBTQ+phobia is reported on and responded to.
- **Becoming anti-racist:** we want to move Renfrewshire Council to an ‘anti-racist’ stance where our workplace culture takes active steps to consistently be a diverse and inclusive employer. We will create a dedicated anti-racism strategy and working group to help us on our journey to becoming an anti-racist organisation.
- **Robust Equality Impact Assessments:** reflecting our commitment to data that makes a difference, Equality Impact Assessments (EIA’s) should be a core part of everyday decision-making at Renfrewshire Council. We will introduce a new EIA process and toolkit to support decision-makers in ensure inclusion becomes second-nature in their planning. We will consistently challenge decisions made to ensure they consider the impact of everyone.

#### 5.4 Outcome 2: Next Steps of Inclusion - Enhancing the Colleague Experience

5.5 Over years 2-3 of our inclusion plan we will build on the brilliant basics of inclusion to further enhance the colleague experience and ensure inclusion becomes part of the DNA of Renfrewshire Council. We will achieve this through three aims:

- **Events that add value:** we recognise the responsibility we hold as a large local employer in celebrating and commemorating events that matter to our diverse local community. We will plan a calendar of events which truly add value to the experience of our teams and customers at Renfrewshire Council. We will commit to continually striving for excellence in our inclusion activities and actively seek new ways of celebrating our diversity.
- **Authentic and accessible communications:** how we communicate our values and approach to inclusion matters and all staff should feel part of our inclusion journey. We will refocus our communication efforts to ensure that they reach all parts of our organisation equally. We will have a robust inclusion communications plan in place to ensure inclusion is at the heart of all that we do at Renfrewshire Council.
- **Data that makes a difference:** the driving force behind our inclusion plan should be reliable and robust inclusion data which tracks outcomes of our inclusion interventions and encourages us to continually work harder to meet our goals. We will put in place a large-scale data activity to generate more accurate data about our people and how we can best support them at work. We will report on the progress of inclusion plan regularly using data.

#### 5.6 Outcome 3: Sector Leading Inclusion – Become the Best Place For People To Work

5.7 Over years 4-5 of our inclusion plan we will build on enhancing the colleague experience to becoming the best place for people to work, ensuring inclusion is an everyday reality for all who work at Renfrewshire Council. We will achieve this through three aims:

- **Adopting an inclusive approach to recruitment and progression:** our teams should reflect the diversity of the local area and country and we can only achieve this through ensuring our recruitment and promotion practices are free from bias and support everyone to be their best. We will conduct a review of our recruitment processes and implement inclusive best practice to ensure equity of opportunity. We will review and improve our internal promotion processes to ensure all staff can develop their careers at Renfrewshire. We will introduce inclusive recruitment and progression training for all hiring managers.
- **Continuous policy development:** our policies and procedures should support all staff in bringing their whole selves to work and ensure staff have access to the guidance they need to keep them happy, safe and feel included at work. We will continue with our robust policy review and development process. We will ensure all policies meet inclusive best practice. We will ensure managers have the training and support they need to understand and apply inclusive policies.

## 6 Measures of Success

6.1 Our five-year inclusion plan has been translated into a measurable action plan which will be monitored regularly and measured against using robust data, reflecting our desire to collect and act on data that makes a difference. The progress against this will be reported via the FARS board and as part of the annual People Strategy update.

## Five-year Inclusion Action Plan

Outcome	Aim	Action(s)	Timeline	Measure of success
Outcome 1 - The brilliant basics of inclusion	Refreshed approach to learning	Review training approach to inclusion and diversity across the whole organisation	Year 1	The number of staff who attend the training and evaluation of the training
		Introduce facilitated inclusion and diversity training for all senior leaders and people managers	Year 1	Evaluation of the training from Snr Leaders and results from the 2024 engagement survey
		Introduce mental health awareness training for all people managers including stress risk assessment process	Year 1	Feedback from managers, staff, absence levels related to mental health
		Introduce psychological safety training for all senior leaders and people managers	Year 2	tbc
		Introduce leadership development training for recently promoted managers	Year 2	tbc
	Focussing on LGBTQ+ inclusion	Review current reporting measures and introduce training and comms initiatives around these if appropriate	Year 1	Feedback from 2024 engagement survey
		Introduce standardised LGBTQ+ inclusion training across the organisation	Year 1	Review of the training and evaluation of training
		Reiterate a zero-tolerance approach to transphobia and LGBTQ+phobia and implement a communications campaign to address transphobia and how to report it	Year 1	Feedback from staff, reduction in concern raised from staff
		Review approaches to engagement with LGBTQ+ staff and trial the introduction of forums for staff to share their feedback safely	Year 2	tbc
	Becoming Anti-racist	Conduct additional focus groups and research dedicated to the experiences of minority ethnic staff	Year 1	Feedback and outcome from these focus groups and less concerns raised and more confidence from our minority ethnic staff
		Create an anti-racism strategy and action plan to address findings from this audit, covering all aspects of race and ethnicity	Year 2	tbc

Outcome	Aim	Action(s)	Timeline	Measure of success
Outcome 2 - Next steps of inclusion	Events that add value	Review inclusion and diversity development and event offer across the organisation and work with specialist suppliers to offer in-depth facilitated training on a wide-range of inclusion topics	Year 2	<i>tbc</i>
		Implement an annual events plan for inclusion activities with senior manager attendance booked in advance and assured	Year 2	<i>tbc</i>
		Introduce event/training evaluation process to continually monitor staff satisfaction with inclusion initiatives	Year 2	<i>tbc</i>
	Authentic and accessible communications	Run further focus groups targeting staff in frontline roles and ensure communications are inclusive to encourage attendance from all staff	Year 2	<i>tbc</i>
		Conduct a review of systems and internal webpages to identify areas for signposting to inclusion initiatives	Year 2	<i>tbc</i>
		Implement an inclusion and diversity communications plan to ensure work is continually treated as a priority and is regularly communicated	Year 3	<i>tbc</i>
		Look into the feasibility of role modelling diverse leaders from across the organisations covering all identities	Year 4	<i>tbc</i>
	Data that makes a difference	Plan and execute a large-scale data activity to encourage staff completion of demographic data and repeat annually	Year 2	<i>tbc</i>
		Anonymised datasets to be given to departmental managers for analysis and appropriate action plans	Year 1	<i>Provide suitable reports for managers</i>
		Conduct additional focus groups for other staff groups to better understand organisational culture	Year 2	<i>tbc</i>
		Research into the positive workplace culture amongst Health and Social Care Partnerships and Chief Executives staff groups to learn from these areas	Year 2	<i>tbc</i>
		Conduct equal pay reviews regularly across all characteristics and all sections of the workforce.	Year 3	<i>tbc</i>
		Introduce annual equal pay report against all protected characteristics with intersectional data analysis and action plan	Year 4	<i>tbc</i>

Outcome	Aim	Action(s)	Timeline	Measure of success
Outcome 3 - Sector-leading inclusion	Robust Equality Impact Assessments	Introduce an updated Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process for all decisions across the council	Year 1	An update EIA process in place and evaluated as effective
		Ensure EIA process includes regular reviews and reflection	Year 2	<i>tbc</i>
		All reports to include links to EIA's to evidence consideration of equality issues within reports	Year 2	<i>tbc</i>
	Adopting an inclusive approach to recruitment and progression	Continue with positive approach to induction and modern apprenticeships	Year 1	Feedback from new start, reduction in attrition in those with less than 1 year service
		Conduct review of recruitment practices to ensure they follow inclusive best practice	Year 4	<i>tbc</i>
		Conduct further research into the experiences of staff on temporary contracts	Year 4	<i>tbc</i>
		Review approach to progression for staff and introduce clearer career pathways	Year 5	<i>tbc</i>
	Continuous policy development	Review maternity returner process to ensure consistency of application across the organisation and implement training and guidance where appropriate	Year 3	<i>tbc</i>
		Expand on who qualifies for carers leave policy and add information on appeals process within policy.	Year 3	<i>tbc</i>
		Continue with policy review cycle and introduce EIA into policy review process	Year 5	<i>tbc</i>
		Review processes to enable all staff regardless of grade to feedback into policy initiatives	Year 5	<i>tbc</i>
		Create guidance on inclusive policy writing to ensure all policies meet inclusive and sector best practice	Year 5	<i>tbc</i>
		Introduce policy training and/or guidance for managers	Year 5	<i>tbc</i>



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This document is available in alternative formats on request.

# Carers Leave Policy

Supporting our people with caring responsibilities  
For all council employees



Renfrewshire  
Council

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## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 We recognise that our some of our people have caring responsibilities which can be challenging at times and may impact their ability to balance their work and home life. The health and wellbeing of our people has, and will remain, our number one priority, and therefore we will continue taking steps to create a healthy and inclusive workplace environment which supports our people to better balance their work and family commitments.
- 1.2 For carers, work can often represent a lifeline, not only financially, but in providing a life outside of caring. However, juggling work and caring responsibilities can be extremely stressful. Research shows that women represent two thirds of unpaid carers in the UK (Census 2021). Nearly three quarters of our workforce are female with an average age of 45, and so we remain fully committed to removing any barriers to work supporting our unpaid working carers population in Renfrewshire.

## **2 Purpose and Aims**

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to support the Council in managing carers leave requests with a clear, fair, inclusive, and transparent process. We will continue taking steps to help identify our people who are primary carers so they can be provided with practical support and advice to help them better balance their caring responsibilities with work.
- 2.2 We aim to engage with our people who are primary carers to better understand their daily challenges and seek to remove any barriers at work, whilst raising awareness of all the necessary support provisions available.

## **3 Scope**

- 3.1 This policy applies to all Council employees. Advice and guidance on this and other support and leave provisions are available from the People and OD Service.

## **4 Definition of a carer**

- 4.1 A carer is someone who helps another person, usually a relative or friend, in their day-to-day life. This is not the same as someone who provides care professionally, or through a voluntary organisation (Carers Rights Bill 2023).
- 4.2 The people that they care for may be impacted by:
  - disability
  - physical or mental ill health,
  - frailty or
  - substance misuse.
- 4.3 For the purposes of this policy, a carer is defined as the person who is provides primary care and provides unpaid support to the person that they are caring for. They do not need to be living with that person.

## **5) Supporting our carers**

5.1 We remain fully committed to providing support to our unpaid working carers in Renfrewshire. We understand everyone's situation and needs are different. If you require support or would like to know more about the support available, you should speak to your manager in the first instance if you are comfortable doing so. Your manager can then discuss a range of workplace supports including:

- Carers Connected Support Network
- Carers Leave
- Carers Passport
- Online resources for people with caring responsibilities
- Local and national carer support organisations
- Changes to your working pattern
- Access to other HR supports, for example Occupational Health and Employee Counselling.

### **5.2 Paid Carers Leave**

5.3 To supplement the support provisions detailed in section 5.1, people with primary caring responsibilities can request up to a maximum of 5 days paid carers leave per year (pro rata in line with their work pattern) to help them support the individual(s) that they are caring for. This leave can be requested in hours, half, and full days.

5.4 Although not an exhaustive list, some examples of when paid carers leave may be approved include:

- Providing support at appointments for the person that you are caring for.
- Temporarily assisting with the care of a relative/partner/friend.
- Managing an unexpected breakdown of care arrangements.
- Managing the transition to or from a care home.
- Providing support when caring for a terminally ill relative or partner.
- Managing the hospitalisation of a relative or partner.
- Providing 'Me Time' (respite) to support an employee's emotional or physical health.
- To attend training to help you support the person(s) that you are caring for.

5.5 Carers leave can only be used by those who are registered on our Carers Register and cannot be used for childcare purposes.

## **6 Carers Register and Paid Carers Leave.**

6.1 In order to qualify for paid carers leave, you must be registered on the Council's Carers Register. This can be done by completing the Carers Registration form on Business World ERP and requires to be annually. Any change in circumstances should be highlighted to the manager and the People and OD Service.

- 6.2 When registering, you should complete the declaration at the bottom of the form confirming that you are the primary carer and you can provide evidence of your caring responsibilities and relationship from: either a GP signature/stamp from either the unpaid working carer or the person(s) they care for, other health professional signature/stamp, Local Carers Centre, or Social Work Department confirmation.
- 6.3 If this type of evidence cannot be provided, other forms of evidence which demonstrates a primary caring responsibility exists will be considered.
- 6.4 Once approved on the Carers Register, a carer requesting carers leave should complete the Carers Leave Request form as soon as is practically possible. Reasonable notice must be provided to allow the manager sufficient time to consider the request. Where there is a question around inclusion on the Carers Register or around leave requested, the manager should take advice from the People & OD Team.

## **7 Considering a request and reaching a decision**

- 7.1 The manager should discuss the request with the carer, considering any relevant personal circumstances. The manager must clarify the reasons for the application and ensure that carers leave is the most appropriate option as on some occasions other alternatives may be more suitable. Before reaching a decision on the request, the manager should consider the following:
- Is the carer approved on the Carers Register.
  - The nature of the leave request.
  - The amount of carers leave requested (hours/half/days).
  - The date the carers leave will start and finish.
  - The operational impact on service delivery and any costs associated with backfilling if required and/or whether work needs to be redistributed.
  - Details of any shared carers leave with a spouse, partner, family member or friend who also works with the Council.
- 7.2 Managers must ensure that decisions are made no later than 14 days after a request has been received. If a manager is unable to approve a request, they must confirm to the carer clear business reasons for refusal. The manager's decision is final and there is no right of appeal.
- 7.3 Any costs associated with a request should be considered based on what is fair and reasonable, taking into account the circumstances of the request.
- 7.4 The manager will record approved Carers Leave on Business World ERP in the same way as unplanned leave.
- 7.5 If an carer is providing care to more than one person, they can only request up to 5 days paid carers leave in total (pro rata).

## **8 Confidentiality**

- 8.1 Information relating to Carers leave, Carers Register and confidential discussions linked to caring responsibilities will be recorded, maintained, and processed

securely by the service, People & OD, and Customer and Business Services. Information will not be divulged to any third parties without your written consent.

8.2 Information processed may include paper or electronic records and will be done so in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation EU 2016/679) (“GDPR”), the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003 (as may be amended by the proposed Regulation on Privacy and Electronic Communications) and any legislation that, in respect of the United Kingdom, replaces, or enacts into domestic law, or any law relating to data protection, the processing of personal data and privacy as a consequence of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union.

## **9 Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment**

9.1 This policy has been impact assessed in line with the Council’s obligation to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## **10 Monitoring and Review**

10.1 This policy will be reviewed regularly and in line with any legislative and organisational changes. The recognised Trade Unions will be consulted on any future changes to this policy.

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Details of Review/Revisions made</b>	<b>Next Review date</b>
2	February 2024	Review of V1 policy to bring into line with current needs of our working carers.	January 2026

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