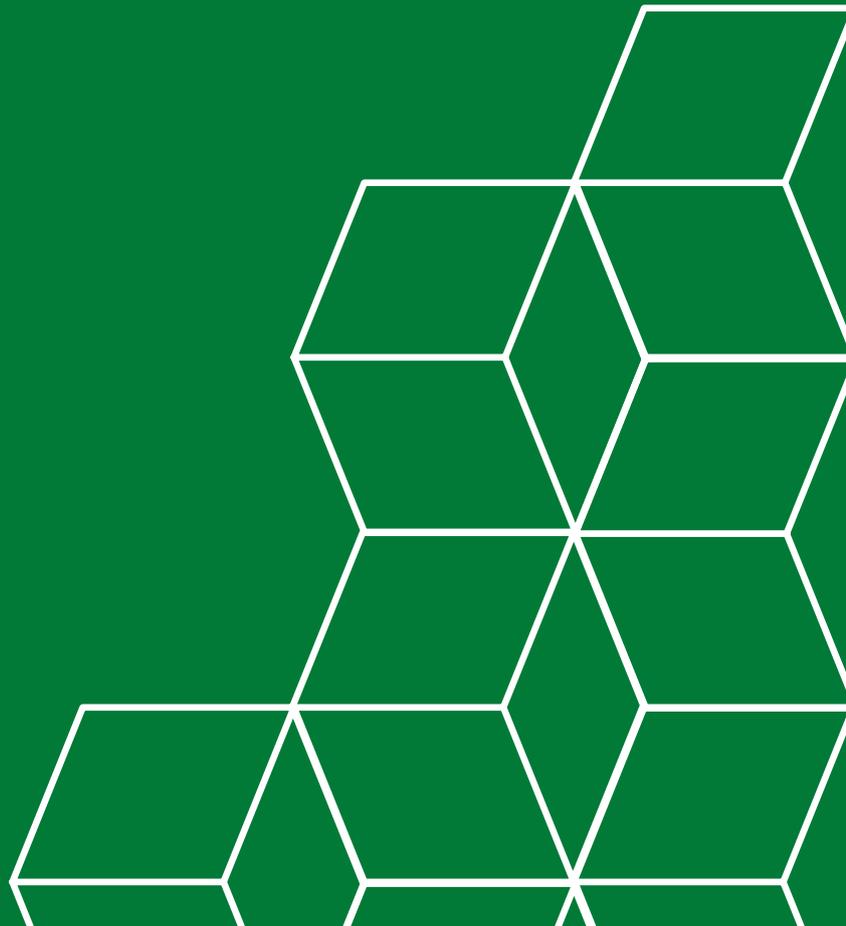


Education Workforce Council

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24

Revised 2021



Introduction

Education professionals play an essential role in shaping the lives and aspirations of young people in Wales. It is therefore essential to ensure that principles of fairness and equality are embedded deeply within the sector and embodied by a workforce that is both reflective of wider society and understands and celebrates diversity. The Education Workforce Council (EWC) is committed to working towards inclusivity and equality within the sector and to ensuring that we, as employers, promote fairness and diversity.

As a public body, we are bound by the Wales specific public sector equality duty (the equality duty) set out in the Equality Act 2010. This obliges us to produce a Strategic Equality Plan, equality objectives, action plans and annual monitoring reports. This Strategic Equality Plan has been produced in line with this duty and sets out how we will work towards the goal of achieving equality of opportunity, both within our organisation and across the wider education workforce in Wales.

Covering the period from 2020-2024, this document builds on the previous Strategic Equality Plan (2019-22) which it replaces. It explains how, through our role and remit, we will seek to develop our approach to tackling discrimination and promoting equality and diversity over the coming years and sets out a series of strategic objectives. The accompanying action plan details how we will work towards these objectives and how our success will be measured.

The legal context

We have a statutory duty to publish a strategic equality plan that outlines our commitment to tackling discrimination. This stems from the Equality Act 2010, which includes a public sector equality duty covering the following protected characteristics:

- age;
- gender reassignment;
- sex;
- race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality;
- disability;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- sexual orientation;
- religion or belief – including lack of belief; and
- marriage and civil partnership.

As a public authority in Wales we are bound by the general duty to carry out our public functions in such a way as to contribute to the development of fairness through:

- eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act;
- advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 set out further specific duties for public bodies in Wales, relating to:

- objectives;
- Strategic Equality Plans;
- engagement;
- assessing impact;
- equality information;
- employment information;
- pay differences;
- staff training;
- procurement;
- annual reporting;
- publishing;
- Welsh Ministers reporting;
- review; and
- accessibility.

Our role and remit

Our role as a regulator and strategic leader in the education sector in Wales, and the obligations that we have to registrants, learners, parents and the public is formally prescribed within the Education (Wales) Act 2014. Our aims and functions, as defined by the Act, are summarised below.

Under the Education (Wales) Act 2014, our principal aims are to:

- contribute to improving the standards of teaching and the quality of learning in Wales;
- maintain and improve standards of professional conduct amongst teachers and persons who support teaching and learning in Wales; and
- safeguard the interests of learners, parents and the public and maintain public trust and confidence in the education workforce.

Under the Education (Wales) Act 2014, our main functions are to:

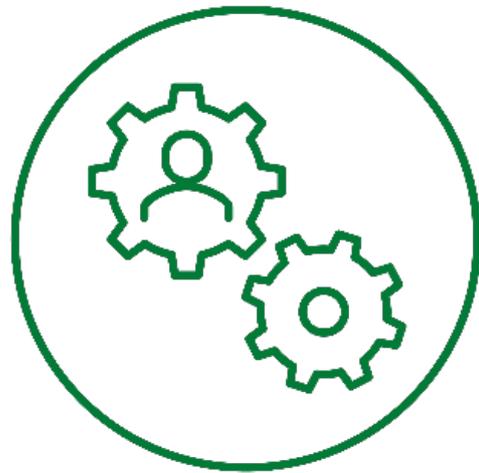
- establish and maintain a Register of Education Practitioners;
- maintain a Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for the education workforce;
- investigate and hear allegations of unacceptable professional conduct, serious professional incompetence or relevant criminal offences that might call into question a registrant's fitness to practise;
- accredit programmes of initial teacher education, and monitor compliance with national criteria;
- provide advice to the Welsh Government and others on matters related to the education workforce and teaching and learning;
- monitor induction and hear induction appeals (where applicable) for teachers;
- promote careers in the education workforce; and
- undertake specific work in relation to teaching and learning at the request of the Welsh Government.

We are not a Welsh Government sponsored body and we are primarily funded by registration fees. However, we also receive grant funding from the Welsh Government for certain specific activities undertaken on its behalf which include:

- administering the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS);
- administering funding, tracking and recording arrangements for induction;
- developing and hosting the Professional Learning Passport (PLP);
- hearing induction appeals and issuing Induction certificates;
- promoting careers in the education professions;
- acting as the Secretariat to the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body (IWPRB); and
- undertaking ad-hoc research projects.

The council also undertakes additional other specific work in addition to that funded by registration fees or grant. These activities (for which the Council recoups its costs) include:

- responsibility for the delivery and further development of the Quality Mark for Youth Work in Wales, in partnership a range of stakeholders; and
- preparing bespoke statistical analyses, using the data from the Register, for other organisations.



Our commitment to equality, diversity and respect

As the independent national regulator for the education workforce in Wales, we work on behalf of learners, parents and the public to register, regulate and support education professionals, ensuring high standards of conduct and competence across the workforce. We also use the unique data and information from our comprehensive Register of Education Practitioners (the Register) to play a leading role in developing evidence based education policy. As we work to fulfil these obligations we are committed to placing equality and diversity at the heart of our approach.

Our commitment to equality and diversity is underlined in our Strategic Plan, within which equality is included (alongside independence, accountability, professionalism, collaboration, supportiveness and financial resilience) as one of seven values that will guide us, as we seek to fulfil our mission and realise our vision.

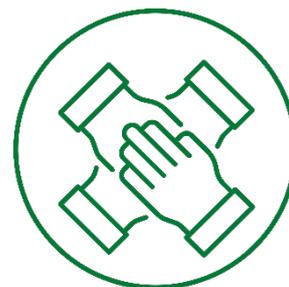
We will seek to ensure that our policies and procedures promote equality and diversity, both within our organisation and, where our statutory remit allows, across the wider education workforce. We also have an important role to play in reviewing and highlighting wider equality issues within the education workforce and working with the Welsh Government and other stakeholders to resolve these matters.

“We are committed to fairness, diversity and equality of opportunity. We work to achieve these goals, both through our own employment policies and workplace culture and more broadly across the education system.”

EWC Strategic Plan 2021-24.

Strategic Equality Objectives

Our approach to equality and diversity, over the years to 2024, will be guided by four strategic objectives, which are set out below. The objectives are underpinned by a detailed action plan (attached as Appendix A) which outlines the specific activities that we will undertake to advance equality and diversity.



Objective 1: Review employment practices to identify barriers to recruitment and career progression

We will conduct a thorough review of our employment practices, including examining staff remuneration, recruitment processes and career progression, with the aim of identifying and addressing any barriers that exist to the development of a diverse workforce.

We will:

- review and, where necessary, improve recruitment processes to help deliver a diverse workforce, ensuring fairness to all under-represented groups;
- review remuneration for all staff, to understand whether any pay gap exists, taking measures to rectify any issues that are uncovered; and
- identify barriers for staff in accessing training and development opportunities.

Objective 2: Develop an inclusive EWC workforce culture

We will work to ensure that our organisation is inclusive, welcoming and understanding to all employees, Council, panel and board members, in order that they are able to be themselves and can perform to the best of their ability.

We will:

- support staff who have caring responsibilities;
- foster greater awareness of equalities (including disability and LGBT issues) amongst our employees;
- ensure that our bullying and harassment policies remain up to date, in order to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace; and
- work to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination, in line with the EWC's mental health and well-being policies and our commitment to the Time to Change Pledge.

Objective 3: Improve our understanding of the needs of our registrants and stakeholders and support our registrants to implement fair and inclusive professional practice

It is incumbent on us, as the independent regulator for the education workforce in Wales, to ensure that we identify any barriers that our registrants and other stakeholders (including learners and parents) might face when interacting with us and that we support our registrants to implement fair and inclusive professional practice.



We will:

- consult and engage with registrants and stakeholders regarding their needs/any barriers when interacting with EWC and review channels as appropriate;
- review and publish fitness to practice data to monitor the appropriateness of guidance and inform training needs; and
- promote awareness of equality and diversity issues within the education workforce.

Objective 4: Promote the development of a diverse education workforce in Wales

Our regulatory responsibilities include promoting careers in the education professions and advising the Welsh Government on matters related to the education workforce and teaching and learning. We will use our influence in this area to highlight and help address issues of diversity within the education workforce, including gender imbalance and underrepresentation of disabled and black and minority ethnic communities.



We will:

- use our data to monitor and highlight issues relating to equality and diversity across all of our registrant groups; and
- promote diversity within the education workforce as part of a broader campaign to promote careers within the workforce.

Our equality processes and procedures

To underpin our commitment to equality and diversity for all individuals, regardless of their protected characteristics, we will seek to improve our governance processes in this area.

We will ensure that policies are kept up to date, taking account of any changes in law or of internal or external circumstances, and will also take measures to:

- improve our monitoring and reporting processes;
- ensure our equality objectives remain relevant (and refresh them where necessary); and
- ensure procurement policies serve to advance equality.

Monitoring arrangements

The equality objectives will be subject to detailed monitoring and reporting processes, principally through the publication of a Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report, by 31 March each year (reporting on performance for the previous year). Progress will also be subject to the scrutiny of the senior management team at its monthly meetings, and the oversight of the Executive Committee and EWC Council through quarterly reports. Detailed mechanisms for monitoring progress are outlined in detail within the action plan (see Appendix A).

Publishing equality information

We will publish equality data on our website, including:

- the annual Statistics Digest which provides a wide range of important information on the education workforce in Wales, and other discrete analyses;
- equality data on applicants for registration and registrants subject to Council's Fitness to Practise procedures, including data on cases handled in the year by age, ethnic group and gender, as part of the Fitness to Practise annual report; and
- a gender pay analysis, reporting salary information of EWC employees by gender.

Equality Impact Assessments

As required by the Specific Duties, outlined within the Equality Act 2010, all relevant policies and procedures will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), which will form part of the development and approval process for any new (or reviewed) policy. This will help us to ensure that decision making is evidence-based and has specific regard to equalities. EqIAs will also outline the nature of any ongoing evaluation that policies, procedures and practice may be subject to.

For new or amended HR policies, an EqlA will be submitted alongside the policy to the Personnel Forum as part of the whole-staff consultation process. The senior management team will also consider the assessment as part of the adoption process. However, the extent to which EqlAs will be relevant to different projects and initiatives will vary and our approach to their use will be proportionate. A repository of completed EqlAs will also be retained centrally.

Equality training and development

We will provide regular training for all staff in relation to the equality duty. When a new member of staff is appointed, the induction process will include an overview of the equality duty, and this will be followed up with further regular all-staff training. Training will be arranged for Council members covering the equality duty and their role in setting the strategic direction of the EWC, reviewing its performance and ensuring that strong governance arrangements are in operation.

Equalities training will also be arranged for the Council's fitness to practise panel members and members of the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Accreditation Board.

Engagement

We conduct a rolling programme of meetings with key stakeholders and interest groups, including regular meetings with education workforce unions, where equalities issues appropriate to our remit are amongst the matters that are discussed.

We will also continue to highlight relevant equalities related information to our registrants and other stakeholders and will continue to ensure that our website and other publications are accessible to all.

We will continue to participate in equalities networks and groups, these include:

- Wales Public Body Equality Partnership;
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Wales Equality and Human Rights Exchange; and
- South East Wales Equalities Network (SEWEN).

We also maintain informal professional relationships with a range of other organisations that promote equalities, including the EHRC, Show Racism the Red Card, Diverse Cymru and Stonewall, ensuring that employees and the senior management team are aware of a range of issues and perspectives relating to equalities.



Appendix A

Strategic Equality Action Plan					
Objective	Actions		Protected characteristic	Timescale	Lead
Objective 1: Review employment practices to identify barriers to recruitment and career progression					
Review and (where necessary) improve staff recruitment processes to help deliver a diverse workforce	1.1	Collect and analyse equalities information relating to staff recruitment, using findings to improve our processes, if relevant.	All	Report annually on year to 31 March	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
	1.2	Analyse the composition of the FTP and ITE accreditation committees and our Youth Work Quality Mark Assessors. If necessary, take pro-active and targeted measures to improve diversity.	All	Review annually – by 31 March	Director of Professional Development Accreditation and Policy & Director of Qualifications Registration and Fitness to Practice
Review remuneration for all staff, to understand	1.3	Publish gender pay analysis, including job, contract type and working pattern, each year and commit to developing an equal pay action plan (depending on the nature and extent of any pay differences identified and their causes).	Gender	Report annually on year to 31 March	Director of Finance and Corporate Services

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whether any gender pay gap exists, taking measures to rectify any issues that are uncovered.	1.4	Conduct an annual equal pay audit to ensure that our systems and processes deliver equal pay.	Gender	Annually – by 31 March	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Identify barriers for staff in accessing training and development opportunities	1.5	Gather equalities data through our biennial staff survey to inform impact assessment, policy development, training plans etc.	All	Biennially – next survey due in March 2022	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
	1.6	Continue to analyse training completed each year for equality monitoring purposes.	All	Annually – by 31 March	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
	1.7	Use the Performance and Development Review (PDR) process to identify individual training and development needs, review progress and discuss any barriers to access.	All	Ongoing - every six months	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Objective 2: Develop an inclusive EWC workforce culture					
Support staff who have caring responsibilities	2.1	Continue to offer flexi-time system for all employees -particularly in order to support those with caring responsibilities.	Age, sex, disability, pregnancy	Ongoing	Director of Finance and

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			and maternity		Corporate Services
Foster greater awareness of equality issues amongst our employees, Council, panel and board members	2.2	Deliver an engaging and accessible programme of training on equality issues for all employees. This will include at least one mandatory training session each year for all staff, focussing on the experiences and needs of particular groups with different protected characteristics.	All	Annually – by 31 March	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
	2.3	Ensure that equality issues are included in annual training for Fitness to Practice panel members, Council members, ITE accreditation board members and Youth Work Quality Mark Assessors.	All	Review annually – by 31 March	Director of Professional Development Accreditation and Policy/ & Director of Qualifications Registration and Fitness to Practice
	2.4	Ensure that our office is visually welcoming for people with different identities and protected characteristics.	All	Ongoing – review annually by 31 March	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
	2.5	Deliver EqIA training to relevant staff.	All	By 31 March	Director of Finance and

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				2021 (and ongoing, wherever relevant)	Corporate Services
Develop policies to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.	2.6	Ensure that our Dignity at Work policy is up to date with respect to preventing and responding to sexual harassment.	-	Review by April 2022 (and every two years)	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Work to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination, in line with our mental health and wellbeing policies and our commitment to the Time to Change Pledge	2.7	Review our mental health and wellbeing policy to ensure that the workplace is supportive of individuals with mental health problems.	Disability	Review by January 2022 (and every two years)	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
	2.8	Run internal anti-stigma campaigns, including using Time to Change materials and inviting professionals to deliver anti-stigma training.	Disability	Ongoing – review annually by 31 March	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
	2.9	Develop a programme of wellbeing activity/ opportunities for staff and begin to implement.	Disability	31 May 2020 and ongoing	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
	2.10	Continue to provide our employees with access to and raise awareness of the employee assistance scheme with the	Disability	Ongoing	Director of Finance and

Strategic Equality Action Plan

		opportunity to access counselling services, including support for individuals experiencing mental health problems.			Corporate Services
	2.11	Continue to offer <i>Mental Health First Aider</i> training, aiming to ensure that two staff members receive this training each calendar year.	Disability	Ongoing – review annually by 31 March	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Objective 3: Improve our understanding of the needs of registrants and stakeholders and support our registrants to implement fair and inclusive professional practice					
Consult and engage with registrants and stakeholders regarding their needs/any barriers when interacting with EWC and review channels as appropriate	3.1	Conduct a survey of our registrants to help ensure that the services that we offer (and how we operate) reflects the diverse needs of our registrants.	All	Conduct survey by 31 March 2022	Director of Professional Development Accreditation and Policy
	3.2	Develop and engage with a diverse network of registrants and stakeholders (including under-represented groups) to inform the development of process, policy and services.	All	Ongoing	Director of Professional Development Accreditation and Policy
	3.3	Review our website and other publications and act upon feedback from users, as necessary, to ensure that they are accessible and inclusive for registrants and the public.	All	Ongoing	Director of Professional Development Accreditation and Policy

Strategic Equality Action Plan

Review and publish Fitness to Practice data to monitor the appropriateness of guidance and inform training needs	3.4	Continue to gather equality data through the case management system and publish an equality and diversity report on fitness to practice activity as part of the Fitness to Practice Annual Report. This data may also be used to inform the FTP guidance and procedures and annual training undertaken by panel members.	All	Report annually on year to 31 March	Director of Qualifications Registration and Fitness to Practice
Promote awareness of equality and diversity issues within the education workforce	3.5	Promote messages to our registrants through our communications channels to increase awareness of mental health issues for education professionals.	Disability	Ongoing – review annually by 31 March	Director of Professional Development Accreditation and Policy
	3.6	Promote awareness of the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for EWC registrants, which includes a requirement for registrants to demonstrate a commitment to equality and diversity.	All	Ongoing – review annually by 31 March	Director of Professional Development Accreditation and Policy
Objective 4: Promote the development of a diverse education workforce in Wales					
Use our data to monitor and highlight	4.1	Ensure that the Register is accurate, to provide a high quality evidence base in relation to equality and diversity issues.	All	Ongoing	Director of Qualifications Registration and

Strategic Equality Action Plan

equality and diversity issues across all of our registrant groups					Fitness to Practice
	4.2	Continue to highlight relevant equality and diversity matters by producing and disseminating robust, evidence-based advice which highlights data and statistical releases, including the Statistics Digest, including equalities data on current registrants and those applying for registration.	All	Ongoing	Director of Qualifications Registration and Fitness to Practice
Promote diversity within the education workforce as part of a broader campaign to promote careers within the workforce	4.3	Develop and deliver a campaign to promote careers within the education workforce in Wales to a diverse audience, including developing specific campaigns relating to protected characteristics.	All	Ongoing	Director of Professional Development Accreditation and Policy