



Glasgow City Council

**Wellbeing, Equalities, Communities, Culture
and Engagement City Policy Committee**

Report by Christine Brown, Head of HR

Item 3

5th March 2026

Contact: Thom Hughes, HR Manager - Corporate

EMPLOYMENT POLICY UPDATES

Purpose of Report:

- Outlines the employment policy updates required to meet new legislative duties coming into effect from April 2026.
- Provides an update on work to strengthen workplace sexual harassment prevention.
- Sets out the actions needed to achieve Bronze accreditation in the Equally Safe at Work Programme.

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to

- Note the forthcoming statutory legislative changes and the actions required to ensure legislative compliance as required by the Employment Rights Act 2025 and the Paternity Bereavement Act 2024.
- Note the actions required to progress the Council's participation in the Equally Safe at Work Programme to support achievement of Bronze accreditation by 31 March 2026 and to refer the proposed changes detailed in appendix 1 to the City Administration Committee for approval.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes No consulted: Yes No

1 Background

- 1.1 The Employment Rights Act 2025 and the Paternity Bereavement Act 2024 introduce new statutory employment rights to be implemented on a phased basis over two years.
- 1.2 The first phase takes effect from 6 April 2026 and requires updates to a range of Council employment policies to meet legislative compliance. Further changes expected from October 2026 will be reported once final regulations are published.
- 1.3 In parallel with these changes, the Council is reinforcing its approach to preventing bullying and harassment, with a particular emphasis on meeting the requirements introduced under the Worker Protection Act 2023 to evidence that we are pro-actively taking action to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.
- 1.4 Alongside this work, the Council is progressing towards Bronze accreditation under Close the Gap's Equally Safe at Work (ESAW) programme, following the Council's decision in 2021 to participate. ESAW provides a structured framework for improving gender-sensitive policies, workplace culture and support for women affected by gender-based violence.

2 Legislative Changes Requiring Policy Updates

- 2.1 To ensure compliance with new statutory requirements coming into force on 6 April 2026, several reforms introduced by the Employment Rights Act 2025 and the Paternity Bereavement Act 2024 must be incorporated into the Council's employment policies as detailed below.

2.2 Employment Rights Act 2025

- 2.2.1 Statutory Paternity Leave and Unpaid Parental Leave will become day-one rights, requiring updates to existing Conditions of Service (COS) Leave and Maternity/Adoption Leave provisions.
- 2.2.2 Sexual harassment will be recognised as a protected disclosure under whistleblowing legislation, requiring amendments to Whistleblowing and Bullying and Harassment Policies to reflect enhanced protections from detriment and unfair dismissal where concerns are raised.

2.3 Paternity Bereavement Act 2024

- 2.3.1 Introduction of a new day-one right to up to 52 weeks extended unpaid paternity leave where the mother or primary caregiver dies during childbirth or within 12 months of birth or adoption.
- 2.3.2 Removal of timing restrictions for taking statutory Paternity Leave and Shared Parental Leave in bereavement cases, allowing leave to be taken at any point within the 52-week entitlement period.

2.3.3 Removal of the restriction preventing an employee from taking Paternity Leave after Shared Parental Leave.

2.4 Worker Protection Act 2023 - Strengthening Implementation

2.4.1 Significant work has already been undertaken to strengthen the Council's bullying and harassment arrangements. This has included updates to the Bullying and Harassment Policy and supporting guidance, targeted awareness activities, delivery of ACAS-led training for newly appointed investigators, development of refreshed e-learning, and steps to strengthen the Bullying and Harassment Support Network. This programme of work supports compliance with duties under the Worker Protection Act 2023, with further activity required to ensure consistent implementation and continuous improvement across services. The following areas must be enhanced within policies, procedures and management practice:

- Improving reporting routes and management information to support early identification and response to concerns.
- Strengthening sexual harassment risk assessment processes to ensure services are actively identifying and mitigating risks.
- Building manager capability in prevention, early intervention and effective handling of concerns.
- Improving consistency in case management and the support provided to employees affected by bullying, harassment or sexual harassment.

2.4.2 This work supports compliance with current statutory duties and will prepare the Council for the more stringent employer obligations expected from October 2026 under the Employment Rights Act 2025. It also aligns with activity underway through the Equally Safe at Work (ESAW) Programme, which supports improvements in sexual harassment prevention, reporting routes and the wider workplace culture.

3.0 Equally Safe at Work (ESAW) Accreditation

3.1 **Programme Commitment** - In April 2021, the Council agreed to participate in Close the Gap's Equally Safe at Work (ESAW) accreditation programme, which supports employers to advance gender equality and improve workplace support for women affected by gender-based violence.

3.2 **Accreditation Framework** - The ESAW framework assesses organisations across six standards: leadership, data, flexible working, occupational segregation, workplace culture, and organisational responses to violence against women.

- 3.3 **Progress to Date** - The Council's application for Bronze accreditation was accepted in 2022. In November 2023, the Council was awarded Development Tier accreditation, recognising progress on Equal Pay, job evaluation and the new Pay and Grading Structure. Close the Gap advised that remaining at this tier for approximately 18 months would best support readiness for Bronze. Work towards achieving Bronze accreditation formally commenced in October 2024.
- 3.4 **Governance** - The ESAW Working Group is chaired by the Director of Legal and Administration, with representation from Corporate and Strategic HR, trade union equality leads, employee equality networks, the Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership and the Hate Crime Policy Officer. The governance structure ensures an intersectional approach, recognising the distinct barriers experienced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, Disabled and LGBTQ+ women. Regular updates are also provided to the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Cross-Party Working Group.
- 3.5 **Recent Activity** Since October 2024, the following activity has been undertaken:
- Completion of a gap analysis against ESAW standards
 - Delivery of an employee survey on women's experiences in the workplace
 - Training for Working Group members on applying a gendered lens to policy and practice
 - Review of sex-disaggregated workforce data
 - Development of an organisational commitment statement
 - Review of Equal Pay, Occupational Segregation and Gender Pay Gap reporting
 - Completion of a gender-lens review of an HR policy
 - Issue of a Manager's Brief outlining required e-learning on flexible working, sexual harassment, and violence against women.
- 3.6 Completion of the remaining actions and submission of required evidence is necessary to achieve Bronze accreditation by 31 March 2026, with much of this work aligned to ongoing improvements in bullying, harassment and sexual harassment prevention.
- 3.7 **Policy and Guidance Updates Required**
- 3.7.1 The gap analysis identified a series of policy and guidance updates required to meet Bronze accreditation criteria and to strengthen the Council's approach to gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence. These updates will ensure clearer expectations of behaviour, reinforce the Council's commitment to tackling gender-based violence and sexism, improve transparency in employment processes, strengthen reporting routes and supports, and ensure that policies reflect the experiences and needs of all women. A summary of the required updates are included in **Appendix 1**.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to note the forthcoming statutory legislative changes and the actions required to ensure legislative compliance as required by the Employment Rights Act 2025 and the Paternity Bereavement Act 2024
- 4.2 The Committee is asked to note the actions required to progress the Council's participation in the Equally Safe at Work Programme to support achievement of Bronze accreditation by 31 March 2026 and to refer the proposed changes in appendix 1 to the City Administration Committee for approval.

5 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

<i>Financial:</i>	No additional financial requirements to implement the changes.
<i>Legal:</i>	No additional legal implications. The updates ensure continued compliance with employment legislation.
<i>Personnel:</i>	No significant changes to personnel processes required. Implementation will be delivered within existing resources.
<i>Procurement:</i>	No procurement implications.

Council Strategic Plan:	Specify which Grand Challenge (s) and Mission (s) the proposal supports. Where appropriate the relevant Commitment can also be listed.
	Grand Challenge 4 Deliver Essential Services in a Sustainable, Innovative and Efficient way for our Communities.
	Mission 3: Enable staff to deliver a sustainable and innovative Council structure that delivers value for money.

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

<i>Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2025-29. Please specify.</i>	Yes, the proposal supports Equality Outcome 4 by contributing to work to end violence against women; and Equality Outcome 7 by advancing equality, diversity and inclusion through strengthened workforce policy and culture.
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What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?

A positive impact is anticipated, particularly for women and for employees with protected characteristics who may be disproportionately affected by workplace inequality, gender-based violence or discriminatory practice. Individual policies or guidance will be subject to an Employment Equality Impact Assessment Screening or full assessment if required.

Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.

The proposed updates will help reduce barriers that parents, women in particular, face in remaining and progressing within the workplace, supporting job security, progression opportunities and access to fair work.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:

No, the proposal relates to employment policy only.

What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?

No impact anticipated.

Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?

No contribution anticipated.

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:

Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report
Yes/ No