



Glasgow City Council

Education, Skills and Early Years City Policy Committee

Report by Executive Director of Education Services

Contact: Dr Carole Campbell

EDUCATION SERVICES DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES RELATED EQUALITIES

Purpose of Report:
To update the committee on the ongoing work in equalities in relation to the protected characteristics of religion or belief & sex.

Recommendations:
The Committee is asked to note the performance, progress and ongoing work across Education Services to advance equality for the protected characteristics of sex and religion or belief.

Ward No(s): Citywide: ✓
Local member(s) advised: Yes No consulted: Yes No

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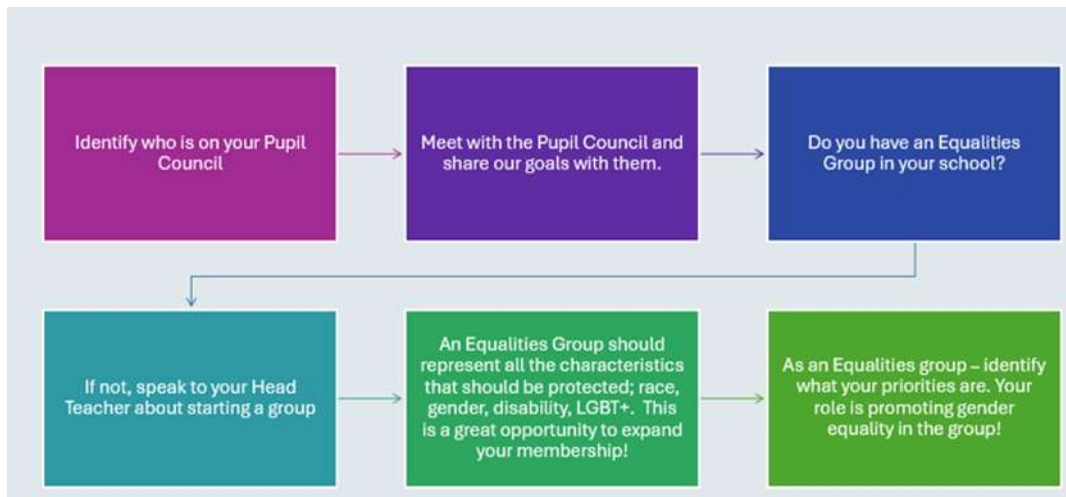
1. Introduction/ background

- 1.1 The Education and Skills committee has asked for Equality update reports at every second scheduled meeting of the committee.
- 1.2 Education Services continue to celebrate the diversity of the city. Our primary and secondary schools teach religious education throughout the curriculum of the main faiths within our city. Individual schools show cognisance of the religions pertinent within their local communities. This includes religious observance and formal teaching & learning. A recent equalities session for senior leaders discussed prejudice and hate crimes and what leaders can collectively do to support positive action in this area and what further support they required from central staff e.g., racism, islamophobia, sectarianism, homophobia etc. The data from this session will be collated and actions identified to be added to the equality's improvement plan.
- 1.3 Education Services continues to deliver targeted programmes, staff training and system-level improvements to fulfil Glasgow's duties under the Equality Act 2010. This report sets out key developments in 2025–26 relating to **gender equality** and **religion/belief-based inclusion**, with a focus on:
- Young Women: Girls of Glasgow (Class of 2031)
 - Young Men: Mental Health and Positive Masculinities Programme
 - Psychological Services' Gender Equalities Self-Evaluation Framework
 - LGBTQ+ Inclusion and PRIDE Allyship
 - Digital Discourse
 - Sense Over Sectarianism (SOS) – Anti-Sectarian Education

2. Equalities Work: Protected Characteristic – Sex

- 2.1 On the 11th October 2025, Glasgow Celebrated the International Day of the Girl with the aim of raising awareness about girls' rights and the challenges they face globally, including lack of education, gender-based violence, and inequality. This involved the Girls4Equity group and supported the Glasgow 850 celebrations.

Those attending discussed what needs to change, including discussions on school policies, extra-curricular activities and availability of opportunities. To plan for change, the group discussed how their Equalities groups can support meaningful change using the following discussion prompt:



2.2 Young Women: Girls of Glasgow – Class of 2031

In October 2025, Education Services launched the legacy group following the 850 Young Women’s initiative and Girls4Equality. The new cohort of S1 young women met again in March 2026 and selected their group name: Girls of Glasgow – Class of 2031.

This initiative will:

- Track and support the same group of young women from S1 to S6
- Develop leadership, voice and gender-equality advocacy
- Provide structured opportunities to influence change within their schools
- Build confidence, ambition and a strong peer network

In Term 4 (2026), S1 pupils will participate in a CREATE-led competition to design a logo representing the group’s values and identity.

A time-lapse photographic record will be taken at each annual gathering to document the group’s journey over six years. A detailed activity and leadership plan will be finalised during the 2025–26 session.

2.3 Equality Impact – Sex

This programme advances leadership and empowerment for girls, supports the reduction of gender inequalities in both participation and achievement, and contributes to the development of positive school cultures shaped by strong pupil voice. It also establishes a foundation for long-term gender-equality learning and activism, ensuring sustained impact as pupils progress through their school careers.

2.4 Young Men: Mental Health and Positive Masculinities Programme

Young men in Scotland today face a convergence of mental health challenges such as rising rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal behaviours; barriers in accessing help; pressures around masculinity and body image; and significant service delays. These are compounded by societal, economic, and digital influences.

There are currently a range of well-established services and supports available in Glasgow to help young people's mental health and wellbeing. These are funded by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and Glasgow City Council.

For example: -

- School Counselling and Therapeutic Supports in all schools
- Play Therapy
- Art Therapy
- Youth Health Service
- Kooth
- Togetherall
- Compassionate Distress Response Service (CDRS)

These services show that the uptake of support changes as a young person reaches adolescence and this is more significant in males. Where the uptake of services for primary aged boys is comparable to that of girls, once they reach secondary school these changes to 30% males to 70% females.

Education Services has collaborated with Strathclyde University, Police Scotland, and school leaders and Psychological Services to develop a new programme to support young men's mental health.

The young men's mental health programme was formally launched on 30 January 2026, with 27 of Glasgow's 30 secondary schools participating in the event. Following the launch, each school was allocated a trained mentor who will support the development and delivery of their individual project throughout the year. The programme focuses on school-based mental health initiatives designed and led by young men themselves, supported by regular mentoring and wellbeing check-ins over the course of 2026. Staff will also benefit from continued professional learning (CLPL) on boys' mental health, emotional literacy and the development of positive masculinities, with ongoing opportunities for schools to share emerging practice across the city.

The programme directly addresses several evidenced challenges experienced by boys and young men, including reduced help-seeking behaviour, barriers to emotional expression, disengagement linked to restrictive masculine norms and associated behavioural or mental health risks. By tackling these issues proactively, the programme contributes to improved wellbeing outcomes for boys, promotes healthier and more inclusive constructions of masculinity, and reduces stigma surrounding mental health support.

2.5 Psychological Services – Gender Equalities Self-Evaluation Framework

Glasgow Educational Psychology Service (GEPS) has drafted a Gender Equalities Self-Evaluation Framework for the service to support systemic improvement.

During Session 2025–26:

- The framework will be presented to the Senior Management Team
- It will then be applied to review and refine GEPS systems and processes

The framework will strengthen:

- Gender-sensitive assessment and intervention
- Staff understanding of gendered experiences of education
- Evidence-informed practice that removes barriers for girls, boys, and gender-diverse learners

2.6 LGBTQ+ Inclusion and Allyship

GEPS continues to maintain a strong commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion across all educational psychology services.

Key Actions

- GEPS staff attended **PRIDE** in 2025–26 to demonstrate visible allyship
- This promotes a safe and affirming environment for LGBTQ+ young people
- Work aligns with Glasgow’s anti-bullying and respectful relationships frameworks

This work undertaken within equalities impacts by reducing stigma, promoting visibility and ensuring safe access to psychological support.

3 DIGITAL DISCOURSE

- 3.1** The negative effects of harmful ideologies shared through social media are widely acknowledged. A key priority for Education Improvement Services and the Education Equalities Working Group is to ensure that staff across Glasgow schools possess the knowledge and understanding necessary to

help children and young people develop the digital literacy skills needed to confront online misinformation and discrimination.

To tackle this challenge, Glasgow Education Services is collaborating with Time for Inclusive Education (TIE) colleagues to implement the Digital Discourse Initiative for all education staff in the city. The initiative, which is a joint educational project created by TIE and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), includes professional learning modules and classroom resources designed to equip school staff with the tools to combat online hate, disinformation and prejudice.

This professional learning offer promotes inclusivity and empowers staff to address sensitive subjects such as extremism and discrimination in a constructive and informed manner. It also helps learners recognise and challenge harmful messages that promote inequality and division.

An initial introduction to this training was successfully delivered to all Child Protection Coordinators and Central Education Officers in 2025.

- 3.2** It was agreed that a school base pilot with pupil workshops and would take place. The pilot began in December 2025 with focus group discussions with learners in P6-S6 classes to inform the development of the workshops. From these discussions, children and young people reported encountering harmful and prejudicial content online and stated that they lacked the knowledge or tools to identify disinformation.

The educational workshops were developed to address this by focusing on strengthening digital and critical media literacy. 39 education workshops were delivered for P6-S6 classes throughout February 2026, with 398 learners participating in the evaluation process. A visiting colleague from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) in Germany observed some pilot workshops. A review of the pilot evaluation data is currently underway, but early thematic insights have been provided and suggest the following for Primary schools:

- 3.3** 212 primary school children took part in the evaluation process. The primary school workshops focused on supporting learners with core critical and digital media literacy skills, helping them identify disinformation and online prejudice, and providing strategies to strengthen resilience to this content. Key themes:

Challenging Online Prejudice:

- Before the workshops, 89% of learners reported seeing unfair or unkind content about certain groups of people online.

- After the workshops, 98% of learners reported that they felt confident applying the strategies to challenge prejudice that they learned from the workshop, with 7 in 10 (70%) reporting that they felt more confident to do so.

Understanding Disinformation:

- Before the workshop, only 1 in 10 (11%) learners reported that they understood what the term "disinformation" means.
- After the workshop, 90% of learners reported that they now understand what the term "disinformation" means and could explain it to others.

Fact-Checking:

- Before the workshop, only 1 in 10 (10%) learners reported that they felt very confident in checking if something they had seen online was accurate.
- Excluding those who already felt confident: after the workshop, 9 in 10 (94%) learners reported that they felt more confident to check if something they had seen online is true.
- Before the workshop, 24% of learners reported that they would check a reliable source to verify information, while 23% would check social media including TikTok or YouTube.
- After the workshop, 75% of learners stated that they would check a reliable source to verify information accuracy. There was a 70% decrease in learners reporting that they would check social media to verify information.

3.4 186 young people at a Secondary School took part in the evaluation process. The secondary school workshops focused on supporting learners with core critical and digital media literacy skills, helping them identify disinformation and online prejudice, and providing strategies to strengthen resilience to this content. The workshops provided verified tools for fact-checking information, and the content was more advanced to support the learners' stage and understanding of online environments.

3.5 Thematic insights suggest the following key themes for the secondary school participants:

Challenging Online Prejudice:

- Before the workshop, 93% of learners reported seeing unfair or unkind content about certain groups of people online.
- After the workshops, 98% of learners reported feeling confident identifying the five stages of a prejudicial conspiracy narrative, with over 7 in 10 (77%) stating that their confidence had increased.
- 97% of learners reported feeling confident applying the strategies learned in the workshop to counter prejudice in a real-world setting.

Understanding Disinformation:

- Before the workshop, just over a quarter of (27%) of learners reported understanding what "disinformation" meant and could explain it to others, while over half (51%) said that they had heard the term but did not understand it.
- After the workshop, 9 in 10 (91%) learners reported that they understood what "disinformation" meant and could explain it to others.

Fact-Checking:

- Before the workshop, only 1 in 10 (13%) learners reported that they felt very confident in checking if something they had seen online was accurate.
- Excluding those who already felt confident: after the workshop, 9 in 10 (95%) learners reported that they felt more confident to check if something they had seen online is true.
- Before the workshop, only 1 in 3 (33%) of learners reported that they would "check a reliable source" to find out if something they had seen online was accurate.
- After the workshop, 88% stated they would "check a reliable source" to check if something they had seen online was accurate. There was a 65% decrease in learners reporting that they would check social media to verify information.

4. Equalities Work: Protected Characteristic – Religion or Belief

4.1 Sense Over Sectarianism (SOS)

Sense over sectarianism was reported in the January committee paper but a short summary has been included as it relates to the protected characteristic of religion or belief. Education Scotland's **Sense Over Sectarianism (SOS)** programme continues to be embedded across Glasgow's primary schools, promoting inclusion and understanding among children of all faith backgrounds.

Aims

- Reduce sectarian attitudes and language
- Build mutual respect between religious and cultural groups
- Support children to recognise prejudice and discrimination
- Encourage positive social change

4.2 Professional Learning and Staff Confidence

The Education Services Social Inclusion Officer supports delivery through:

- Ongoing CLPL
- Co-delivery with class teachers
- Shared resource development

This approach strengthens teacher confidence and ensures sustainable anti-sectarian education.

4.3 Curriculum Delivery and Resources

Workshops are delivered annually to **P6–P7** pupils using:

- SOS Primary Workshop Pack
- Divided City resources
- Digital presentations and video content

These materials engage pupils and support progression into secondary school.

4.4 Reach and Participation (2025–26)

Over the past 12 months, the Sense Over Sectarianism (SOS) programme has delivered approximately 370 workshops across more than 90 primary schools, engaging over 4,500 pupils in learning about inclusion, respect and anti-sectarian attitudes. These workshops can be used to support a *Divided City* novel study or delivered as a stand-alone element of a school's equality and citizenship curriculum.

The programme makes a significant contribution to advancing equality in relation to religion or belief. It challenges prejudice rooted in religious identity, reduces stigma and harmful stereotypes, and strengthens interfaith understanding among young people. In doing so, SOS actively promotes equality, mutual respect and positive relations between children and communities of different faith backgrounds.

5 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial:

Legal:

Personnel:

Procurement:

Council Strategic Plan: Reducing poverty & inequality

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2025-29? Please specify.

What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?

Positive impact

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

Climate Impacts:

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

No

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

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

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:

Are there any potential data protection impacts

as a result of this report
Y/N

If Yes, please confirm that
a Data Protection Impact
Assessment (DPIA) has
been carried out

6. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the performance, progress and ongoing work across Education Services to advance equality for the protected characteristics of sex and religion or belief.