



# **Equalities Mainstreaming Report 2023- 2025**

## 1. Introduction

The Public Sector Equalities Duty was established by Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This is referred to as the General Equality Duty. Specific duties were created by secondary legislation in the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. The General Equality Duty requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from other people;
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate on public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The protected characteristics The Equality Act 2010 refers to are:

- Age
- Disability
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership

As a statutory Regional Transport Partnership, SWestrans is a listed public body in The Equality Act 2010 and is subject to The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

The purpose of the specific duties in Scotland is to help those authorities listed in the Regulations in their performance of the General Equality Duty.

The specific duties require a listed public authority to:

- Report on mainstreaming the general equality duty;
- Publish equality outcomes and report progress;
- Assess new or revised policies and practices;

- Review existing policies and practices;
- Gather, use and publish employee information;
- Publish gender pay gap information;
- Publish an equal pay statement;
- Consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement.

SWestrans is committed to fulfilling the duties set out by The Equality Act 2010 and reporting on the areas which are relevant to the organisation as required by the Specific Duties 2012.

## **2. Regional Transport Partnership Equalities Duty**

The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 placed a duty on Scottish Ministers to create Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) covering the whole of Scotland. SWestrans is one of seven RTPs and covers an area contiguous within the boundaries of Dumfries and Galloway Council. The Partnership Board consists of five D&G Councillor members and two external members, one from South of Scotland Enterprise and one from NHS Dumfries and Galloway.

A number of individuals and representatives with a variety of interests have been appointed as Observers to the SWestrans Board, including from diversity groups, and the transport sector.

The Board is supported by SWestrans Officers, namely, Lead Officer, Governance Officer, Finance Officer, Team Leader, 3 Policy and Projects Officers, Public Transport Officer and Public Transport Assistant. SWestrans does not directly employ any staff, all staff are employed on its behalf by Dumfries and Galloway Council, and as such they are subject to Dumfries and Galloway Council policies and procedures. SWestrans is therefore exempt from the specific duties detailed in The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 in relation to employee information and pay. SWestrans has a responsibility to satisfy itself that Dumfries and Galloway Council is meeting the public sector equality duties in relation to employment on its behalf. SWestrans has determined that Dumfries and Galloway Council has a published Equalities Scheme in place and fulfils its equalities duties.

As a listed authority SWestrans is required to publish a report on the progress it has made to make the general equality duty integral in the exercise of its functions. For this reporting cycle the mainstreaming report must be published no later than 30 April 2025 and subsequently at intervals of not more than two years.

SWestrans is also required to publish a new set of equality outcomes in 2025, which will cover the period 2025-2029 and will enable the organisation to better perform the general equality duty. Progress reports on these Equality Outcomes will be published every 2 years as part of the Equalities Mainstreaming Report.

### **3. Mainstreaming the Equality Duty**

#### **3.1 Regional Transport Strategy**

One of the main functions of RTPs is to develop a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) which sets both the policy and framework for transport delivery in the RTP area. In developing and delivering the RTS for Dumfries and Galloway, and working with statutory and other key stakeholders, SWestrans seeks to ensure that connectivity and accessibility needs of all sectors of society, and communities, are recognised and addressed.

The first SWestrans RTS which was published in 2008 and is relevant to the 2021-2025 reporting cycle is founded on the concept of the Sustainability Triangle, recognising that economic, environmental and social development are mutually dependent, and that progress towards sustainability in each policy element is required if sustainable development overall is to be made real.

In the 2008 RTS it states 'Our vision is a transport system for the South West of Scotland that delivers the internal and external connectivity required to sustain and enhance the region's economy and communities whilst minimising the impact of transport on the environment.' The set of projects proposed in the 2008 Strategy are closely aligned to objectives and strategic outcomes that were set out by the Scottish Government at the time of writing the 2008 RTS. The five high level objectives for transport at that time were identified as:

- Promoting economic growth;
- Promoting social inclusion;
- Protecting the environment and improving health;
- Improving safety of journeys;
- Improving integration.

SWestrans new Regional Transport Strategy 2023-2042 was signed off by Scottish Ministers in summer 2024 and includes a number of actions and activities that will enhance equalities and will be directly relevant to the 2025-2029 Equality Outcomes that have been set.

SWestrans is also committed to contributing to the National Transport Strategy (NTS2) priority to reduce inequality and the associated outcomes to ensure everyone in Scotland will share in the benefits of a modern and accessible transport system that:

- Will provide fair access to services we need;
- Will be easy to use for all;
- Will be affordable for all.

### 3.2 Impact Assessments

SWestrans has adopted the Impact Assessment Toolkit developed by Dumfries and Galloway Council. The impact assessment tool assists SWestrans to check whether its policies and practices are fair and inclusive. An impact assessment must be completed when designing policies and strategies, establishing practices, making major decisions (including financial decisions). Implications for equalities are outlined in each Board report to ensure they are clearly highlighted allowing board members, community representatives, diversity groups and other interested parties the opportunity to scrutinise the implications and participate in decision making that affects them.

The Impact Assessment Toolkit is available on SWestrans website [www.swestrans.org.uk](http://www.swestrans.org.uk)

### 3.3 Operations

SWestrans is responsible for procuring socially necessary local bus services across Dumfries and Galloway, these services are delivered by several bus operators. SWestrans has a responsibility to satisfy itself that operators who deliver services on behalf of SWestrans meet the requirements of the public sector equalities duties.

Operators are themselves subject to the general requirements of the Equality Acts, both as service delivery organisations and as employers.

When tendering for services SWestrans has access to support provided by Dumfries and Galloway Council's Procurement Team. SWestrans will include terms in contract specification documents requiring compliance with equalities legislation and the equalities aspirations of SWestrans.

### 3.4 Mainstreaming activities

Below is a list of some examples of how SWestrans mainstreams the Equality Act in its day to day business.

#### *Functions*

- All Board meeting venues are accessible and access issues are considered.
- Board meetings are 'hybrid' allowing attendance face to face or virtually via MS Teams.
- Board meetings are live streamed, recorded and published on SWestrans website to allow access to all.
- Engagement with diversity groups is facilitated through observers to the Board.
- Board reports are published on our website.
- SWestrans is a member of the Dumfries and Galloway Equality and Diversity Working Group.

### *Policy and strategy*

- Strategies and Policies have been subject to Impact Assessments.
- The new Regional Transport Strategy 2023-2042 has undergone an Equality Impact Assessment.
- Dumfries and Galloway Councils Impact Assessment Toolkit has been adopted.

### *Projects*

- All SWestrans projects comply with the General Equality Duty.
- Public engagement and formal consultation, when required, is always undertaken including key stakeholders from diversity groups.
- SWestrans has adopted the Thistle Assistance Card to make using public transport easier for older people and those with disabilities or illness.

### *Operations*

- All local bus assets are fully accessible for people with a physical impairment.
- Accessible buses are specified on all contracted services.
- When tendering for services SWestrans is responsible for meeting the Duty and in doing so includes terms in contracts requiring compliance with equalities legislation.
- Public transport timetables are available on our website and printed accessible copies can be produced as required.

## **4. Equality Outcomes**

SWestrans develops Equality Outcomes based on transport policy and evidence of national and local transport inequality. During the development of the new RTS 2023-2042 particular focus has been given to consultation with a variety of key stakeholders, including representatives from the Equality and Diversity Working Group, to allow all stakeholders to have their say and influence the RTS direction. An Equality Impact Assessment has also been undertaken as part of the development of the RTS.

Below is a list of the equality outcomes and the actions/activities SWestrans has endeavoured to deliver on during 2021-2025-

### **Equality Outcome 1: Everyone will be able to easily access and understand the local bus service information they need.**

#### **Actions/activities**

- Improve at-stop bus publicity (as well as improving at-stop facilities)
- Improve printed publicity
- Improve digital publicity

- Improve communications and language to ensure that our information and services are accessible
- Engagement with stakeholder groups to understand information gaps
- Adopt additional methods of informing our communities

**Equality Outcome 2: Public transport services are more flexible to meet the identified travel needs of those who need them most.**

Actions/activities

- Work with national agencies and transport operators to protect key public transport links
- Lead on the development and delivery of the new Public Transport Model agreed by Dumfries and Galloway Council and SWestrans
- Advocate for increased financial support for rural bus services
- Making sure the voice of protected characteristics groups is heard within the new Regional Transport Strategy and Delivery Plan
- Work with the Third Sector and Community Planning Partners to enhance the capacity of Community Transport and deliver the mission within the Dumfries and Galloway Community Transport Strategy 2022 to 2025
- Develop, design and implement a more flexible transport delivery model
- Trial Demand Responsive Transport solutions
- Work with young people representatives so they can make full benefit of free travel for Under 22s.
- Work with the Local Employability and Skills Partnership and South of Scotland Enterprise to identify transport solutions to ensure sustainable, public and active travel access to employment, education and training locations.
- Review and update the existing local bus Root and Branch Policy to reflect changes in transport demand.

**Equality Outcome 3: Access and affordability issues are reduced through new transport solutions developed with partners.**

Actions/activities

- Involve individuals and communities with lived experience of poverty in identifying needs and designing transport services to respond to those needs. We will engage with volunteers with lived experience of poverty through the Tackling Poverty Reference Group.
- Explore a range of ways of making travel more affordable. We will lead on a review of fees/fares and work with transport operators and Transport Scotland to encourage and assist with integrated ticketing options and reduced fare schemes.
- Examine ways of addressing the transport challenges faced by people on low incomes in remote and rural areas. We will identify areas where affordability of transport services is affecting access to health appointments and employment opportunities and work with partners to pilot and deliver transport solutions.
- We will continue to investigate how new and innovative transport methods (e.g. demand-responsive transport, autonomous vehicles, and Mobility-as-a-Service) can be used to address transport barriers faced by people on low incomes and to connect particularly remote and rural communities.
- SWestrans will work to encourage use of the new free bus scheme for Under 22s – transport affordability issues will only be alleviated for young people if they have adequate access to services. We will also undertake work to mitigate the unintended consequences that the scheme may have on other users, i.e. that it does not drive up the single adult fare.

**Equality Outcome 4: Our work is informed by a greater understanding of the transport and travel needs, barriers faced and experiences of people with protected characteristics.**

Actions/activities

- Improved data collection and analysis
- Improved engagement and consultation with:
  - Protected characteristic groups, especially:
    - Disabled
    - Sexual orientation
    - Race

- Equality Working Groups and third sector organisations
- Transport operators on identified accessibility barriers
- Involve Protected Characteristic groups throughout the delivery of a new Regional Transport Strategy to identify barriers and a transport work plan/programme of support and improvements
- Use the Place Principle

## **5. Conclusion**

SWestrans acknowledges the importance of mainstreaming the Equalities Act 2010 and the Equalities Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 in its day-to-day business. SWestrans will do this by continuing the mainstreaming activities outlined in this report and working to achieve the equality outcomes set for 2025-2029 through the new Regional Transport Strategy 2023-2042 and Annual RTS Delivery Plan.