



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Agenda item 5: approach to equality, diversity and inclusion issues

Approach to equality, diversity and inclusion issues.

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Decision required

SPC Members are asked to agree:

- i. To the proposal for a 3-step approach for the SPC to build support for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) into its operating arrangements.

Issue

1. The Social Partnership Council (SPC) are asked to agree a 3-stage approach, proposed in this paper, to ensure the SPC embeds Equality, Diversity and Inclusion considerations in its advice.

Background

2. At the SPC meeting held on 10 July, SPC members discussed how the SPC could support equality and diversity and were asked to agree their preferred approach from 4 options presented. A summary of the proposals is attached at Annex A.
 - Option 1 proposed establishing a subgroup to consider equality and diversity issues and report their findings back to the main Council.
 - Option 2 set out that every discussion paper presented to the SPC for a decision would include a section considering equality and diversity issues in relation to the item under consideration.
 - Option 3 was for equality and diversity to be a standing agenda item at each meeting of the Council and,
 - Option 4 was for the SPC to consider how to make use of existing equality

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work across Welsh Government, social partners, and expert groups.

3. Members favoured a combination of the options, therefore the SPC Secretariat have prepared this proposal below which captures the blended approach to equalities work as recommended by members.

Step 1: include Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) considerations in all discussion papers.

4. The Secretariat could develop a template for SPC discussion papers which would include a section considering Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as a mini-impact assessment. This could capture EDI in its widest sense and include Welsh Language. All SPC members will be asked for their comments, in addition some members may be contacted to support the Secretariat in conducting the impact assessment, based on their particular expertise and/or networks.
5. In addition, there would be an opportunity for members to raise issues in the meeting emerging from the discussions. The Chair would check at the end of every meeting whether there are any EDI considerations that have not been covered.

Step 2: use of expert groups

6. Where a paper is discussed which raises EDI considerations and members request more information, requests could be channelled via the Welsh Government's Communities and Social Justice Division who could sign post to relevant forums in order to utilise experts with lived experience and the expertise of the existing groups and equality networks across Welsh Government. The SPC Secretariat could contact the relevant expert group and then provide members with a written response. Additionally, should

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members request further information or seek clarity on a matter, then the SPC could invite a member of the expert group to attend the future meeting.

Step 3: establish a Task and Finish group

7. Should SPC members feel that an emerging issue requires a particular focus then the SPC could establish a time limited task and finish group with a specific remit as determined by the SPC. The group could bring in expertise as required to further inform and/or supplement any findings or advice it provides to the SPC.

Next steps

8. The SPC is asked to agree to the principle of a 3-step approach to EDI issues, and for any further comments to be sent to the SPC secretariat.
9. If members agree to the suggested approach, then this will be built into the operating arrangements for the next SPC meeting.
10. It is proposed that the SPC review the approach within 12 months.

Annex A

Option 1: establish an Equality and Diversity subgroup

1. One possibility would be to establish an equality and diversity subgroup whose role would be to consider equality and diversity issues and report

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their findings back to the main Council.

2. Section 8 of the Act allows for the SPC to establish relevant subgroups. A subgroup of the SPC may (a) carry out any function under section 1 of the Act delegated to it by the SPC; and (b) help the SPC carry out its functions in any ways specified by the SPC.

Pros

- Having an Equality and Diversity Subgroup, tasked by the SPC to look at distinct issues, would allow for a greater and more diverse range of voices to be heard.
- An equality and diversity subgroup could help to ensure that the voice and lived experience of people with protected characteristics is fully taken into account in information and/or advice given to the Welsh Ministers on matters relating to social partnership, fair work or socially responsible procurement by the SPC.
- A subgroup could also bring in expertise as required to further inform and/or supplement any findings or advice it provides to the SPC.

Cons

- No one subgroup could cover the whole range of lived experience.
- An Equality and Diversity sub-group could be seen as sidelining the status of equality and diversity work.
- A subgroup could duplicate work done by the wide range of expert groups and lived experience groups that provide advice to Welsh Government (such as the Anti – racist Wales Action Plan External Accountability Group bringing together Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic experts and people with lived experience.)

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Option 2: SPC discussion papers to include a section covering equality issues

3. This option would mean that every discussion paper presented to the SPC for a decision would include a section considering equality and diversity issues in relation to the item under consideration.

Pros

- This would lead to equality and diversity issues being fully considered when items are brought to the SPC and truly integrated into its work.
- It will ensure that consideration of equality and diversity implications is tailored to the matter in question.
- It would also negate the need for a subgroup because equality and diversity issues would become a natural part of the work that the SPC does.

Cons

- This will place additional burdens on drafters and could be seen as overcomplicated and bureaucratic.

Option 3: equality and diversity to be a standing agenda item

4. When the paper referred to in para 3 was discussed by the SPF, Trade Union side felt standing agenda items on the SPC could be a more effective means of ensuring the voices of those from diverse backgrounds are heard, though it was highlighted that this may create a 'talking shop'.

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Pros

- It allows for issues to be considered by the main Council rather than be delegated to a subgroup which could be considered as sidelining an equality and diversity issue.

Cons

- The SPC already has a very packed agenda for each meeting, and it would be hard to fit in a regular standing item for discussion.
- The SPC membership cannot cover the whole range of lived experience and would rely on others being drafted in to provide any additional advice or information to the SPC.

Option 4: consider how to make use of existing equality work across Welsh Government, our social partners, and expert groups

5. There is potential to tap into existing areas of expertise within Welsh Government, social partners, and expert groups, such as ArWAP and EAG rather than add an additional group.

Pros

- This would give the SPC access to expert groups that reflect the voice and lived experience of people with protected characteristics to inform its future work.
- It could avoid any potential duplication and provision of overlapping advice to Ministers where another group could be considering the same issue as the

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SPC at the same time.

Cons

- it would need to be clarified and agreed for each issue the appropriate group(s) for the SPC to engage with and how that engagement would take place.

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