

SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

**Gender Equality
Scheme**

April 2007 to April 2010

April 2007

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1. Foreword

This is South Staffordshire Council's first Gender Equality Scheme and forms an integral part of the Council's wider Comprehensive Equality Policy. The policy sets out how the Council promotes equality of opportunity regardless of race, gender, disability, age, religion or belief or sexual orientation, in the employment of staff and its service delivery.

This Gender Equality Scheme is a joint venture between Cannock Chase District Council, East Staffordshire Borough Council, Lichfield District Council, South Staffordshire District Council, Stafford Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, and Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service.

Equality between men and women has advanced significantly since the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975. In order to build upon that progress, the Equality Act 2006 places a statutory duty to promote gender equality. Although much has been achieved, there is still a long way to go to achieve full equality for all.

We welcome the Act and are fully committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and harassment and promoting equality of opportunity between men, women, boys', girls' and transgender people.

Working with our partners, we will strive to ensure that our priorities reflect the differing needs of the male, female and transgender members of our communities, where they exist.

This Scheme sets out what we will do to tackle gender inequality issues. It is important that employees and residents across Staffordshire are involved in the development and delivery of the Scheme, as this will ensure that the duty leads to real outcomes and practical improvements.

2. Introduction

The Equality Act 2006 created the Gender Equality Duty for the public sector. There are two parts to the Scheme, the "general" duty and the "specific" duty. The general duty places a legal duty on the Council:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- To promote equality of opportunity between men and women

To help meet its general duty, the Council, like most other public bodies covered by the duty, has a specific duty to:

- Produce a Gender Equality Scheme identifying its gender equality goals and actions to meet them, in consultation with employers and stakeholders

- Monitor and review progress
- Review the Scheme every three years
- Develop, publish and regularly review an equal pay policy, including measures to address promotion, development and occupational segregation
- Conduct and publish gender impact assessments of all major policy developments, and publish its criteria for conducting such impact assessments

Gender roles and relationships structure men's, women's, transgender people's, boys' and girls' lives. Women are frequently disadvantaged by policies and practices that do not recognise their greater caring responsibilities, the different pattern of their working lives, their more limited access to resources and their greater vulnerability to domestic violence and sexual assault. Men are also disadvantaged by workplace cultures that do not support their family or childcare responsibilities, by family services that assume they have little or no role in parenting, or by health services, which do not recognise their different needs. Both sexes experience from stereotyping of their roles and needs.

The term 'sex' is used to describe biological differences between women and men.

The term 'gender' refers to the wider social roles and relationships, which structure men and women's lives.

3. What is a Gender Equality Scheme?

The Gender Equality Duty [GED] comes into force in April 2007. It requires public authorities to promote equality between women and men and eliminate unlawful sex discrimination and harassment. This means the public sector will have to develop policies, design services and have employment practices with the different needs of women and men in mind. The duty covers all the functions of a public authority, such as policy-making, public services, and employment.

Instead of relying on only individuals to make complaints about sex discrimination, the duty places the legal responsibility on public authorities to demonstrate that they treat men and women fairly. Thirty years after the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA), there is still widespread discrimination. The rights of individuals do not oblige organisations to promote equality. The GED will bring about real change in the culture of public organisations and the onus will be on organisations to promote equality, rather than just on individuals to take cases. It does not replace the right of individuals to take cases against a public authority.

All public authorities are, therefore, legally required, when exercising their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (SDA) and discrimination that is unlawful under the Equal Pay Act 1970 (EqPA)
- To promote equality of opportunity between men and women

“Due regard” means that authorities should give due weight to the need to promote gender equality in proportion to its relevance to a particular service or function.

The Duty covers all services, functions and activities, not just employment and service delivery but also budget setting, procurement, regulatory functions and setting the framework within which the organisation will deliver services and also frameworks for decision making. This places a positive, proactive responsibility on authorities to work towards a more equal society by thinking about the needs of men and women when developing services and functions, rather than adjustments at the end.

4. **Specific Duties**

The specific duties have been introduced to help public authorities meet the general duty. The specific duties are a means to an end (steps, methods or arrangements) and not an end in themselves. Meeting the general duty must be the ultimate objective.

This means that when we tackle a specific duty we must ask ourselves whether we are meeting the general duty or what we should consider doing to help us meet it.

For example, one of the specific duties is to make arrangements to monitor policies for any adverse impact on the promotion of Gender equality. Unless we put those arrangements into practice fully and deal with any adverse impact our policies might be having we may not be meeting the general duty.

The specific duties are set out for:

- Policy making;
- Service delivery and;
- Employment

In order for the Council to meet the requirements of the General Duty the Specific Duties require the Council:

- **To prepare and publish a Gender Equality Scheme** by 30 April 2007 showing how it will meet its general and specific duties and setting out its gender equality objectives

- In formulating its overall objectives, **to consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap**
- **To gather and use information** on how the public authorities policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services
- **To consult stakeholders (i.e. employees, service users and others, including trade unions) and take account of relevant information** in order to determine its gender equality objectives
- **To assess the impact of its current and proposed policies and practices** on gender equality
- **To implement the actions set out in its scheme** within three years, unless it is unreasonable or impracticable to do so
- **To report** against the scheme every year and **review** the scheme at least every three years.

5. National and Local Context

National Context

For further information on the national context please refer to the EOC's guide 'Facts about Women and Men in Great Britain 2006' which can be found at http://www.eoc.org.uk/pdf/facts_about_GB_2006.pdf

Local Context

Some facts about women and men living in South Staffordshire drawn from the 2001 census:

- Of the South Staffordshire population of 105,300, there is an equal gender split between females and males – 50.8% and 49.2% respectively.
- There are similar levels of limiting long-term illness, as defined as permanently sick or disabled, (3.9% for women as compared to 4.6% for men).
- The majority of part time workers are women who make up 85.7% of such employees.
- Women have much lower levels of self-employment (4.8%) than men (14.7%).

- More men (33.9%) than women (20.9%) occupy senior, manager and professional jobs.
- There are seven times more female than male lone parent households with dependent children, (1,648 as compared to 235).

The data available regarding transgender communities is scarce, limiting people's ability to understand problems and their causes, set priorities and track progress. Further involvement and consultation with transgender communities will be a priority for 2007 to help us identify further actions.

At 1st April 2007 the Council employed 390 permanent staff, of which 224 (57.4%) were women. A high proportion of the workforce (39.0%) are part-time and these are predominantly women at a ratio of 3:1 (75.7%) to men.

In 2006/07 there were two Best Value Performance Indicators related to gender. These are:

BVPI 2a - The level of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the authority conforms in respect of gender, race and disability.

BVPI 11a - The percentage of top-paid 5% of staff who are women.

For 2006/07 South Staffordshire Council will report attainment of Level 1 for BVPI 2a, an improvement on previous years. BVPI 11a will be reported as 26.66% of top-paid staff that are women which is almost double the figure (14.28%) for 2005/06. The upper-quartile figure for BVPI 11a for District Councils was 31.25% in 2005/06 and it is our aspiration to reach this figure within two years.

6. Vision, Priorities and Objectives

Vision

South Staffordshire Council has set out its vision:

“As a well managed council, we will strive to make South Staffordshire a safe and healthy place to live, with prosperous villages and thriving communities where everyone can develop their abilities to the full and pass on to future generations a better environment.”

In support of this specific aims and objectives have been declared including;

“We will maintain and improve access to services and facilities for all.”

Priority Areas

In striving to deliver this vision in regard to gender equality there are some critical areas that deserve particular attention. Work will need to focus on effective working in partnership with other key agencies and existing partners to address inequalities and adverse impact in:

- Access to services, resources, opportunities and funding streams
- Opportunities for employees, in employment and career development
- Effective arrangements in place to meet the requirements of legislation
- Mechanisms in place to adequately engage with women in decision making processes
- Effective partnerships to address sexism, including harassment, bullying and discrimination.

This Scheme sets out the framework, within which we can promote gender equality for all our service users and our employees. The following objectives are intended to support and complement this framework:

Objectives

Objective 1 – We will eliminate unlawful discrimination by:

- Ensuring that no existing or potential employee or service user will receive less favourable treatment than another on the grounds of gender or gender re-assignment
- Seeking to ensure that when we commission services, work in partnership or procure goods or services that the organisations that we work with understand, adhere to and practice equal opportunity policies
- Encourage applicants from all members of the community
- Ensuring that transgender employees have confidence in our procedures and feel supported

Objective 2 – We will eliminate harassment by:

- Ensuring that Service users and employees are treated with dignity and respect at all times regardless of their gender
- Providing a positive and supportive work environment for all employees which is free from harassment and where individuals are encouraged to realise their full potential

Objective 3 – We will promote equality of opportunity by:

- Undertaking Equality Impact Assessments on all new, proposed and existing (where reasonable) functions, policies and reviews
- Ensuring all employees receive equal pay for work of equal value
- Delivering gender equality training where appropriate
- Encouraging all genders to participate and provide feedback in any of the changes or improvements made.
- Ensuring that gender equality is embedded throughout our strategic objectives and Corporate Plans
- Promoting equality in the delivery of services in both access, provision and in employment
- Increasing the numbers of male and female employees taking up flexible working options
- Increasing the number of women sitting on decision making bodies, panels and committees

7. Engagement and Consultation

We recognised from the outset, that to create a Scheme that really made a difference to the people of South Staffordshire; we needed to involve the people who really matter...our service users, employees, members of the community and voluntary and community sector organisations.

We believe our partnership approach in producing the Disability Equality Scheme involving East Staffordshire Borough Council, Keele University, Lichfield District Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, South Staffordshire District Council, Stafford Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service and Staffordshire Police led us to achieve more meaningful engagement with disability organisations and groups as we pooled all our contacts together into one database enabling us to contact over 284 local

organisations and groups across Staffordshire inviting them to be involved in the creation of the Scheme.

We have decided to adopt the same approach in terms of carrying out engagement activities for the Gender Equality Scheme. We have sent out letters to over 90 gender groups across the county of Staffordshire to invite them to be involved in our Scheme. From this we will be running a number of focus groups asking people to give their opinions on accessing our services.

In terms of engagement with the transgender community, we have recently become sponsors of the Gender Advisory Bureau who provide transgender training and consultation, who will assist with the facilitation of our involvement activities.

Feedback from all of the involvement events will be forwarded to partner organisations to enable them to identify what issues are relevant to their own individual organisations. We will also inform all who have taken part in being involved in the development of the scheme, of the actions that have been highlighted from the focus groups or round table discussions.

8. Employee Involvement

The Council is conscious that effective communication and training will play a key role in the implementation of the Gender Equality Scheme. The Council is committed to the development of a training plan for its employees and elected members to include all aspects of Gender equality. The aim is to mainstream consideration of Gender Equality into all areas of training and development thereby reaching hearts and minds

- All elected members and staff will be required to participate in equalities training to raise awareness of equality issues
- all officers with management responsibilities will be required to undertake recruitment and selection training
- All managers responsible for delivering the functions will be required to undertake training in the understanding of the duty, its meaning for their work and the authority's priority goals in gender equality
- An Equalities Training Programme will be developed for all new members
- Awareness of equality issues will form part of the council's induction programme.

We aim to develop a Council standard for gender equality training. The following areas will be covered within the Scheme: -

- Awareness training
- Anti-discrimination training
- Information for employees on the Act “responsibility and accountability”
- Information for and from public service partners and contractors

Training/briefing will be provided for all employees and members – specific training will be provided for those involved in:

- The development, launch, monitoring and impact of policy
- Producing, publishing and marketing of reports
- Consultation processes
- Handling, monitoring and investigating complaints
- Delivery of services
- Customer care standards, monitoring and training.

9. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Monitoring Services and Policies to comply with the general duty will be a learning process for employees. To meet these responsibilities employees and elected members will need to be trained and supported. At this stage of developing the Scheme the following ways of monitoring Service and Policies have been identified.

Monitoring and reviewing of all service strategies and policies is essential if the Council is to identify how effective they are in combating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity. The Council will do this by: -

- Assisting managers in developing or improving existing monitoring systems to ensure informative equality data is collected
- Developing guidelines for equality monitoring
- Examining all monitoring systems for compliance with corporate standards and equalities legislation
- Analysing the data collected and identifying where there are blocks to equality and why these occur
- Develop strategies and targets to address any disparity within the services we provide. This will include consulting with under represented groups on such policies and targets
- Monitor the implementation of service equality action plans and performance indicators
- Produce an annual report for the Council identifying the results of any impact assessments, consultation exercises and monitoring exercises. The results of such exercises will be published on our website

- By consulting with Gender Equality groups in establishing data reflecting the take up of services and the experience of those using services in order to identify any gaps in service provision.

The Council will continue to carry out workforce monitoring and to set equality targets for under-represented groups. We will also consider the Government's proposals for flexible working and caring for parents or older children. The Council has already carried out a pay review and implemented its single status agreement. It will continue to review its pay grading structures and monitor employment processes and procedures.

10. Complaints

The Council provides a wide range of services and we serve a large number of customers. However, we expect to find that some of our customers may be unhappy with the way they have been treated. Sometimes our customers will not be satisfied with what we have or haven't done for them.

The Council wants to provide the best services it can, so it is important to give high priority to listening to people's views. We can learn from what people say, and we can focus on providing services that people want, and in the way they want them to be provided.

The Council welcome complaints because they believe that people's views are important. The Council looks at complaints about the council, the services we provide and the people who provide them. The Council can use this information as an opportunity to gain a better understanding about what people in South Staffordshire think or feel about the Council.

Complaints can help the Council to improve our services, or it can help the Council to look at whether they have done something wrong and how it can be put right. The Complaints Procedure takes into account the diversity of South Staffordshire's residents and visitors. The Complaints Procedure is available in different languages, Braille, or audiotape or other formats, upon request.

Anyone from front-line staff, through to office support staff or management, directors or elected members can receive a complaint, or be involved in dealing with complaints.

The aim of the Complaints Procedure is to resolve complaints quickly and simply. To try to do this, we deal with the complaint as soon as possible. Where possible, the complaint is dealt with by a senior manager near to where the complaint was made.

11. Equality Impact Assessments

Meeting the General Duty

We need to understand whether our services are meeting everyone's needs and that people who need our services have access to them. To help us to do this we carry out an Equality Impact Assessment.

What are Equality Impact Assessments?

An Equality Impact Assessment is a way of deciding whether an existing or proposed policy, procedure, practice or service does (or may) affect people differently, and if so, whether it affects them in an adverse way.

Assessments will be carried out on new policies and services, as they are developed and over time on existing policies and services. Gender issues will be considered alongside the other five equality strands (race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation and age).

A summary of the results of the Equality Impact Assessments, Action Plans, and consultation exercises will be reported as part of the annual review of the Gender Equality Scheme.

12. Action Plan

As a result of undertaking impact assessments on our policies and functions, we can identify areas of good practice and strengths, and areas that need further consideration and improvement in Gender equality.

The Council will also assess the impact of proposed policies on gender equality.

The Council will monitor complaints that it has not fulfilled its statutory obligations and will seek to resolve such complaints; The Council will conduct a comprehensive review of this Scheme within three years of its publication. The review will include an assessment of how the Council has complied with its obligations, and how the general duty to promote gender equality has been discharged.

To decide how relevant a particular service is to the Gender Equality Scheme, the following questions should be asked: -

1. What is the purpose of the function? Who is it intended to benefit? How they benefit?
2. Is there public concern that certain functions or policies are discriminatory or potentially disadvantage people?

3. How much evidence do you have – none, a little, some, or a lot (for example from research, consultation, complaints) of this?
4. Are there areas where there could be a direct or indirect unequal impact on different groups? Consider whether any unequal effect amounts to adverse impact on certain groups or unlawful discrimination.
5. Is the function likely to be the subject of complaints and grievances under the provisions of the act?
6. How does this function affect different genders in the community we serve?
7. Is there any reason to believe that people from different genders groups are being, or could be, adversely affected by this function? Which Gender does this function affect?

High Priority (Year 1)

Those function that are relevant to all or part of the general duty, and for which there is some or substantial evidence that different groups are (or could be) differently affected, or about which there is public concern, should the highest priority for mainstreaming Gender equality and be addressed in the first year.

Medium Priority (Year 2)

Those functions that are relevant to part of the general duty, and or which there is little or some evidence that different racial groups are (or could be) differently affected, or about which there is a public concern, should have medium-term priority for mainstreaming Gender equality and should be addressed in the second year.

Low Priority (Year 3)

All other functions should be scheduled for mainstreaming gender equality in the third year. Some functions may have very limited relevant to the general duty – except, of course in employment, but they should still be addressed and responded every three years.

An Action Plan has been prepared and included at Appendix 1 for consideration. It is recognised that this plan has been developed on the basis of information currently available. Following wide consultation, as referred to within the Scheme, a revised Action Plan, with priorities, will be prepared for consideration in 12 months time.

GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME – ACTION PLAN 2007-2010

Leadership and Corporate Commitment

Objective	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
Publish Gender Equality Scheme (GES)	Prepare and publish GES and promote involvement of gender specific groups, the community and employees	GES published	April 2007	Head of Human Resources (H of HR's)
Increase public awareness of the GES	Publication of the GES on intranet and internet and circulate to relevant groups	Demonstrate commitment to the GES by Council and ensure external organisations will be involved in monitoring progress	April 2007 and ongoing	H of HR's
Better understanding of community and employee needs	Undertake programme of consultation with community groups (including trans-gender groups) and employees. Analyse results of tri-annual BVPI User Satisfaction Survey to highlight issues of dissatisfaction in one gender over another	Improve satisfaction of both men and women in the use of services	December 2007 September 2007	H of HR's Policy and Partnership Manager (P&P Mgr)
Ensure elected members and employees are briefed about the introduction of the GES	Undertake elected member and staff awareness raising sessions.	Awareness of GES and understanding of its intention	September 2007	H of HR's and Head of Governance and Scrutiny Services (H of G&SS's)
Identification of manager and employee responsibilities regarding GES	Meetings and training sessions. Managers cascade information to all employees.	Managers aware of responsibilities All employees aware of Scheme	September 2007	P&P Mgr H of HR's

Objective	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
Establish framework and system for Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's)	Produce a timetabled programme of policies, procedures and functions requiring EIA's. Introduce a system to ensure all new policies undergo on EIA before agreed by Executive	Systematic approach to assessing policies for adverse effect on women and men	September 2007	H of G&SS's
Monitor the impact of equality strategy	Review Corporate Equality Strategy and Policies to address the need to promote gender equality and eliminate harassment of transgender employees	Reduce opportunity for incidents of harassment	September 2007	H of HR's
Ensure gender equality issues are integrated into Service Plans	Services consider and set gender targets when developing service plans through the use of EIA's, consultations and monitoring processes	Improved services for women and men. Services address different needs of women and men	April 2008	P&P Mgr
Establish system of reporting on GES to provide understanding of progress	Report to Council and community	Enabling performance monitoring and management	Annually from June 2008	P&P Mgr
Increase number of female elected members	Link into national schemes to increase female involvement in public service	Women are more represented in public and political life. The community is reflected in the Council. Promote positive role models	Ongoing May 2007 – May 2011	H of G&SS's H of HR's P&P Mgr

Service Delivery

Objective	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
Audit current methods of gathering information on the effects of Council policies and procedures on women and men	Identify gaps in information and seek to establish innovative and new methods of addressing data gaps	Improve information to influence future delivery of service	April 2008	Service Manager (SM) Diversity Group (DG)
Ensure all services take account of gender equality issues in delivery of service	Link equalities issues into service plans and set appropriate targets	Service Plans take account of gender issues	April 2008	Strategic Management Team (SMT) SM P&P Mgr
Ensure a consistent monitoring procedure is adopted that enables an understanding of the needs of both women and men	Standardise corporate monitoring form and use consistently. Ensure Customer Relationship Management System is capable of capturing all relevant data including customer satisfaction	Common forms of data capture	April 2008	DG Director of Revenue and Customer Services (DRCS)
Ensure procurement system addresses equality issues including gender	Review Procurement Policy	Contractors and external service providers meet statutory requirements. Council will meet its responsibility.	April 2008	Head of Customer and Electoral Services (H of C&ES's)
To take action where there may be an imbalance in the use of services by gender	Encourage men or women to take up services where there is evidence to suggest that a gender does not access a service	To have a balanced access to services where appropriate	April 2007 and ongoing	SM

Employment

Objective	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
To have a balanced workforce at all levels	To have more women in the top 5% of earners within the Council. To have more applicants from women for senior position. Carry out positive action to encourage women to apply for senior positions by developing proposals for a programme for accelerated employee development that encourages under-represented groups into senior management	Higher proportion of women employees in top 5% of earners. Improve representation of women and under-represented groups at senior management levels	April 2007 and ongoing	SMT H of HR's
Develop policies that support employees to integrate work and family responsibilities	Promote work-life balance. Continue to raise awareness of available options. Develop flexible working arrangements. Investigate feasibility of introducing Childcare Voucher Scheme	Increased awareness and take-up of flexible working opportunities	April 2008	H of HR's
Identify any differences in pay for men and women and implement strategies to rectify discrepancies	Revisit Equal Pay System	Reduction of gender pay gap	April 2010	H of HR's
Ensure access to training and development opportunities is available to all employees	Develop systems to monitor the uptake of training opportunities. Develop strategies to ensure access to training is provided. Review Employee Development and Appraisal Scheme	Equal access to training for both women and men. Personal development opportunities available fairly to all employees	July 2007 December 2007	H of HR's H of HR's

Objective	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
Managers to have an understanding of gender issues, including trans-gender, as they affect the workplace	Develop awareness and include within management development programme	Challenge gender stereotyping and promote positive role models	September 2007	H of HR's
Ensuring a safe and healthy work environment for employees	Develop a Domestic Abuse Policy. Review Harassment and Bullying Policy. Raise awareness of trans-gender and review all relevant policies to cover this	Employees experience a safe working environment	July 2007 September 2007 Ongoing	H of HR's DG and H of HR's
Ensure that gender safety issues are addressed in policy development	Issues such as lone working are considered when forming policy	Policy takes safety issues into account	Ongoing	SMT and SM