

Report to: **Executive**
Date: **6 November 2007**
Report of: **Executive Member for Improvement.**
Subject: **Gender Equality Scheme**
Ward: **All**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to present the draft Gender Equality Scheme (see Appendix A) to the Executive for approval.

2. Consultation

- 2.1. The Gender Equality Scheme has been developed in response to the District's Gender Equality Duty that was introduced through the Equality Act 2006.
- 2.2. Consultation and monitoring data that had previously been gathered, from both staff and service users, has been used to produce this Scheme. We have recognised that there is insufficient relevant and accurate data available to us at present, and that the initial processes within the Scheme includes continuous corporate consultation through the Equality Impact Assessments.
- 2.3. This Scheme has been written in consultation with Executive Member for Social Inclusion and Culture and.
- 2.4. The Scheme has been to Management Team, Scrutiny Management Board and Working Executive for their comment and approval.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Equality Act 2006 places a statutory Gender Equality Duty on all public authorities. The main aim of the Gender Equality Duty is to ensure public authorities address issues of inequality, all forms of discrimination and harassment on the grounds of a person's gender. The term "gender", within the scope of our Gender Equality Duty, refers to men, women and transgender people. This duty not only impacts upon our role as an employer, but also the way in which we provide both our internal and external services. Equality Impact assessments will therefore have a direct impact upon the way our services are designed and adapted.
- 3.2. The Gender Equality Duty places a number of specific duties on the District. These are to:
 - Prepare and publish a Gender Equality Scheme showing how we will meet our duties and set out our gender equality objectives. This would usually include those addressing any gender pay gap. However, in 2002 the District of Easington completed its Equal Pay Review. This was a significant piece of work that has been fully implemented.
 - Gather and use information on how policies and practices affect gender equality in the work force and the delivery of services
 - Consult stakeholders and take account of relevant information
 - Assess the impact of our current and proposed policies and practices
 - Implement the actions set out in our Gender Equality Scheme within three years
 - Produce a report about the scheme every year and review it at least every three years

3.3. However, this Scheme should not be seen in isolation. The Gender Equality Scheme is an integral part of the Council's role as we aim to place equality and diversity at the core of all our services' policies and procedures.

3.4. The Gender Equality Scheme's initial Action Plan forms its interim outcomes. It links to the Equality Impact Assessments that are presently being undertaken. Completion of the Equality Impact Assessments is an action within the District's Corporate Plan for the next year. Once completed, these assessments will determine what actions need to be undertaken by individual services. These actions will be incorporated within the Service Plans. The appropriate Scrutiny Committee will monitor these actions. Once agreed these specific actions will form the basis of the revised Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan.

3.5. To ensure that the actions associated to the Scheme do not become fragmented, the Equality and Diversity Working Group will monitor them. An initial review will take place in April 2008.

3.6. This Scheme is a 'live' document with its progress being monitored by the Equality and Diversity Monitoring Group and is subject to review every 12 months.

4. Implications

4.1. Financial Implications

There are some limited financial implications - actions due to the Scheme will need to be owned and resourced by departments through their Service Plans. The costings for the Equality Impact Assessment Training and Consultancy have been met centrally.

4.2. Legal Implications

This Scheme ensures compliance with the Equality Act 2006, our Gender Equality Duty and all other relevant legislation and guidance in relation to gender.

4.3. Policy Implications

The Gender Equality Scheme has implications for policy and service planning across the Council. This will be facilitated through the continuation of the Equality Impact Assessments programme

4.4. Risk Implications

If this Scheme is not implemented the District is at risk of being issued with a compliance notice by the Commission for Equality and Human Rights. It should also be noted that without correct implementation there is also a risk of litigation by individuals, organisations or outside agencies.

5. Communications

5.1. Once the Gender Equality Scheme is agreed, it must be published via our website, made available in our public buildings and published through any other reasonable means.

5.2. We will strive to make the Scheme's documentation as accessible as possible. The District's website includes the 'Browsealoud' programme for people who have a visual impairment or reading difficulties. In addition, we will provide it, on request, in large print, audiocassette and Braille, as well as in alternative languages.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1. Corporate Plan and Priorities

As this is a corporate document and affects all services, if agreed, this document will help to address all of the corporate objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan. This will be directly through the Equality Impact Assessment programme.

6.2. Service Plan

Services are undertaking Equality Impact Assessments of their systems and processes, policies and procedures, functions and services, and customs and practices. This will facilitate the implementation of the Scheme through present agreed priorities and work streams.

6.3. Performance Management and Scrutiny

The Equality and Diversity Working Group will monitor the progress of this Scheme. The Equality and Diversity Officer will produce an annual report.

6.4. Sustainability

There are no sustainability implications.

6.5. Expenditure related to 'well-being' powers

This policy will promote the social and environmental well being of the District by promoting gender equality and involvement. Through Equality Impact Assessments Services can, where necessary, ensure improved access to opportunity.

6.6. Human Resource Implications

Predominantly the implementation of the Scheme will be through the Equality Impact Assessments, the implications of which staff have previously been committed. There are no specific additional training requirements for the implementation of the Scheme.

6.7. Information Technology

The document will be available to view and download from the District's website, however, there are no other specific information technology implications.

6.8. Equality and Diversity

The Gender Equality Scheme ensures compliance with the Equality Act 2006, facilitating the District meeting its Gender Equality Duty. In addition, the Scheme also helps us to progress the Equality Standard for Local Government and helps to mainstream equalities throughout the organisation.

6.9. Crime and Disorder

Implications for crime and disorder are in respect of the present services that the District provides. These will be addressed through the Service's Equality Impact Assessments, ensuring that they are both monitored and provided on an equitable basis.

6.10. Human Rights

The Gender Equality Scheme is in compliance of the Human Rights Act 1998 Article 14.

6.11. Social Inclusion

This Scheme will impact upon social inclusion by addressing issues of gender inequality. It will support our continuing service improvements and enable the District to promote gender equality to our partners.

6.12. Procurement

The Council is still responsible for meeting the Gender Equality Duty when its functions or services are carried out by another organisation. In order to comply with the Equality Act 2006 and the Equality Standard for Local Government, we must ensure our contractors and partners meet the requirements of the Gender Equality Duty. Equality requirements are part of the Council's terms and conditions. In addition, we must monitor our contractors in relation to their ongoing work regarding Equality and Diversity.

7. Recommendations

7.1. It is recommended that the Executive agree the attached Gender Equality Scheme.