



Chester-le-Street
District Council

Adoption of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life

CHARTER STATEMENT

Our Commitment

Chester-le-Street District Council is committed to ensuring that all citizens in the District, its staff and all those associated with the Council receive fair and appropriate services and treatment, irrespective of their nationality, ethnicity, race, sex, marital status, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age or other social factor.

Our Equalities **Vision Statement**, as set out in the Council's Equality Policy is:

The Council will integrate diversity and equality best practice into its services. This will ensure equality of service delivery to all members of the community, an inclusive, discrimination-free work environment and compliance with all aspects of equalities law and governmental strategies.

As an employer, a provider of services and in its democratic representation and processes, Chester-le-Street District Council positively embraces its social and legal responsibilities regarding equality and diversity. The Council also recognises the inherent benefits to stakeholders and the wider community of moving beyond the fundamentals of equality to actively encouraging diversity and fairness.

The adoption of this Charter, which is a key action contained within our Equality Scheme Action Plan, is a clear demonstration of the Council's continuing commitment to ensure gender equality in all aspects of its functions.

Equality Practice

Chester-le-Street District Council has set out how it does and will address equality in its Corporate Equality Plan 2007. The Plan also incorporates an Equality Policy, an overarching all-strand Equality Scheme, and an action plan that details how we will meet the requirements of both the Equality Standard for Local Government and our own Equality

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Scheme. The action plan is monitored by our Equality & Diversity Working Group, which includes officers, the Leader of the Council and representatives of minority groups within the community.

Charter Action Plan

The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life is structured as:

	Section	Sub Section
Article 1	1. Democratic accountability	
Article 2	2. The political role	Political representation
Article 3		Participation in political and civic life
Article 4		The public commitment for equality
Article 5		Working with partners to promote equality
Article 6		Countering stereotypes
Article 7		Good administration and consultation
Article 8	3. General framework for equality	General commitment
Article 9		Gender assessment
Article 10		Multiple discrimination or disadvantage
Article 11	4. The employer role	
Article 12	5. Public procurement and contracts	
Article 13	6. The service delivery role	Education and lifelong learning
Article 14		Health
Article 15		Social care and services
Article 16		Childcare
Article 17		Care of other dependents
Article 18		Social inclusion
Article 19		Housing
Article 20		Culture, sport and recreation
Article 21		Safety and security
Article 22		Gender based violence
Article 23		Human trafficking
Article 24	7. Planning and sustainable development	Sustainable development
Article 25		Urban and local planning
Article 26		Mobility and transport
Article 27		Economic development
Article 28		Environment
Article 29	8. The regulator role	Local Government as a regulator
Article 30	9. Twinning and international co-operation	

Many of the requirements contained within the 30 Articles are already inherent in both the council's Corporate Equality Plan, and in our policies, procedures and practice. However, we recognise that there are additional things that we could do that would enhance our commitment to gender equality.

The attached Charter Action Plan seeks to address any gaps in current provision and has been informed by an initial gap analysis. The action plan is set out under the 9 main section headings of the Charter Structure above.

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Also, in developing the Charter Action Plan, we have sought to embed the six principles set out in the Charter document:

1. Equality of women and men constitutes a fundamental right
2. To ensure the equality of women and men, multiple discrimination and disadvantage must be addressed
3. The balanced participation of women and men in decision making is a pre-requisite of a democratic society
4. The elimination of gender stereotypes is fundamental to achieving equality of women and men
5. Integrating the gender perspective into all activities of local and regional government is necessary to advance equality of women and men
6. Properly resourced action plans and programmes are necessary tools to advance equality of women and men.

Progress of the Charter Action Plan will be monitored quarterly by the Equality and Diversity Working Group.

Adoption of the Charter

Adoption of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life was formally approved by Council in September 2007.

On behalf of the Council, Cllr Linda Ebbatson in her roles of Leader of the Council and Equalities Champion, has signed the formal document below which constitutes a formal agreement to meet the requirements of the Charter.

A copy of the signed agreement has been forwarded to the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, as is required.

THE EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN IN LOCAL LIFE

A Charter for Europe's local and regional governments to commit themselves to use their powers and partnerships to achieve greater for their people

I the under-signed (name of signatory)
holding the office of
in (name of local / regional government)

by this my signature confirm that the above-mentioned authority has formally agreed to adhere to the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, and to comply with its provisions, and that I am duly authorized to act on its behalf in this matter.

Signed

Dated

I agree to send a signed and completed copy of this form to the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, as promoter of the Charter, at the following address :



The Secretary-General
Council of European Municipalities and
Regions
15 rue de Richelieu
F-75001 Paris - France

**EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR EQUALITY OF WOMEN & MEN IN LOCAL LIFE
Charter Action Plan**

Charter section	Actions	By when	Responsibility	Success measure
1 Democratic accountability	Review Community Engagement Strategy with a view to: a) investigating / establishing community networks b) take action to encourage people (especially women) to become involved in the democratic process	September 2008	L Ebbatson I Forster	Report of the review, including recommendations for actions.
2 Political role	Investigate the barriers to more active involvement of women councillors at Chester-le-Street District Council, and make recommendations for change	June 2008	L Ebbatson	Women councillors are able to participate more fully in political activities within the council
	Engage with the Society of Women in Local Government to provide opportunities for networking and publicity, and to gain an understanding of women's roles in differing cultures	June 2008	L Ebbatson	Opportunities for networking and publicity are maximized. Women from different cultures are encouraged to take up political roles.
	Investigate the possibility of establishing a youth parliament or council, and make recommendations	June 2008	C Turnbull N Cummings	A decision can be made regarding the viability of such a parliament or council
3 General framework for equality	Undertake Diversity Impact Assessments of policies and procedures for each service and corporately, including employment/human resources policies	December annually	Service Team Managers Head of OD / HR Manager	Any and all discrimination is eliminated from policies and procedures
	Launch adoption of the Charter as part of Local Democracy Week, supported by MEP Stephen Hughes	15 October 2007	J Underwood L Ebbatson	Issues of gender discrimination and stereotypes will be brought to public attention, and the public will be made aware of the council's commitment to gender equality
	Publicise launch of Charter Adoption in District News and on council website	December 2007	J Underwood H Geertsema	Gain understanding of migrant worker population within the district and their specific needs, and in particular gender-related issues. Understanding and knowledge is applied to ensure improvements in service provision
	Take part in the Durham Equality & Diversity Partnership event, tackling issues around East European Migrant Workers	October 2007	J Underwood Other key members of staff	

Charter section	Actions	By when	Responsibility	Success measure
4 Employer role	<p>Deliver training on gender equality, as part of the council's training and development plan</p> <p>Establish systems for monitoring complaints and grievances relating to gender equality</p> <p>Undertake annual review of relevant personnel policies relating to gender equality</p> <p>Implement BVPI action plans established to address issues in relation to gender equality and opportunities for women</p> <p>Fully introduce Home Working policy across the council</p>	<p>April 2008</p> <p>June 2008</p> <p>As per annual review date</p> <p>As per BVPI action plan timetable</p> <p>December 2007</p> <p>December 2007</p>	<p>Head of OD / HR Manager</p> <p>Head of OD / HR Manager</p> <p>Head of OD / HR Manager</p> <p>Head of OD / HR Manager</p> <p>Head of OD / HR Manager</p> <p>Head of OD / HR Manager</p>	<p>All staff have an understanding of issues around gender equality and discrimination</p> <p>Data and feedback is used to improve gender equality of employees</p> <p>Robust personnel policies are in place to prevent discrimination on the grounds of gender</p> <p>Improved BVPI performance</p> <p>Flexibility of working arrangements is in place that will support employees with family / caring commitments</p> <p>More family friendly personnel policies are in place to support the varying needs of individual employees</p>
5 Public procurements and contracts	<p>Work in partnership regionally to develop Harmonisation of Local Government Contract Documentation (Goods and Services) in terms of good equality practice</p>	<p>March 2008</p>	<p>J Underwood D Wright</p>	<p>Procurement practice of public sector bodies regionally is equitable, fair and consistent. Contracts have clear standards and contractors are monitored.</p>
6 Service delivery role	<p>Develop and deliver low level sanctuary scheme for victims of domestic abuse</p>	<p>March 2008</p>	<p>L Fisher</p>	<p>Sanctuary scheme is available, allowing victims of domestic abuse to remain safely in their own homes</p>
7 Planning and sustainable development				
8 Regulator role				
9 Twinning and international co-operation	<p>No actions are currently planned, as the Council holds excellent twinning arrangements with Kamp-Lintfort in Germany. Further opportunities may be sought in the future, depending on the outcomes of Local Government Review</p>			