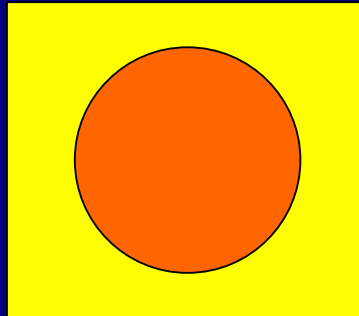

Staffordshire

County Council

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Gender Equality Scheme



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Staffordshire County Council Gender Equality Scheme

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Foreword

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 Trans people.

Working with our partners, we will strive to ensure that our priorities reflect the differing needs of the male, female and Trans 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.

1. Introduction

Gender roles and relationships structure men's, women's, Trans people, 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 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

All public authorities are 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.

(b) What is a Gender Equality Scheme?

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

- **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

2. 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 Staffordshire drawn from the 2001 census:

- Of the County's population of Staffordshire, there is an equal gender split between females and males – 50.9% and 49.1% respectively.
- There are more females over the age of 64 15% of the 64+ population are male, 18% are female.
- More women have limiting long term illness (18.4%) as compared to men (17%).
- The majority of part time workers are women who make up 81.9 per cent of such employees.

- Of all economically active 16 – 74 year olds high proportions of White British females (71.2%) work, compared to all other ethnic groups (64%).
- More men (56.7%) than women (43.3%) occupy professional jobs.
- The percentage of pupils at the end of key stage 4 achieving 5 GCSEs at A* - C are 37.5% boys and 48.3% girls.

* Please see the Appendices for more detailed information on the local context.

Trans Community

- There are estimated to be 5,000 Trans Men and Trans Women in the UK (PFC website).
- 30% of Trans Men and Trans Women reported feeling forced out of employment following transition. ('Employment Discrimination and Transsexual People' survey 2001 Stephen Whittle)
- Many Trans Men and Trans Women report feeling they are working at below their skill levels due to discrimination, and managing pressures of being a Trans individual in the workplace.
- 1 in 10 Trans Men and Trans Women faced harassment daily in work at the time of transition, and even after a move of job, 25% still faced harassment. ('Employment Discrimination and Transsexual People' survey 2001 Stephen Whittle)
- Trans Men and Trans Women face workplace harassment by employers, customers, or suppliers.
- At time of transition, 6% had suffered serious harassment and physical abuse.
- Although unemployment rates post transition have reduced from 1992, from 35% to 8.7%, there is a significant rise in the numbers of Trans Men and Trans Women claiming sickness or disability benefits, and those retired. The numbers who are self employed have also increased. The 2001 employment discrimination survey, has speculated that these trends may be due to the pressures experienced by Trans Men and Trans Women in the transition process.

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

3. Shared Priorities

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:

Objective 1 – We will eliminate unlawful discrimination by:

- Ensuring that no existing, 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 Trans 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

4. Staffordshire County Council Priorities

Staffordshire County Council has a clear vision and strategic focus for the Council's longer-term ambitions and the greater impact we can make to the quality of life and Staffordshire's people and communities. The following are key to achieving our vision:

- Seamless frontline services focused on customers and communities;
- Outcome focused and performance driven culture so that we know that we have made a difference;
- Excellent service quality;
- A strong value base;
- Passionate, committed and enthusiastic people;
- Recognised as an employer of choice;
- Equality of opportunity for all.

We aspire to be an "excellent" council, both for the quality of services we provide and through national recognition as a "leading" council.

(Source: Staffordshire 2012, The Strategic Plan 2006 - 2009)

Our Scheme sets out the framework, contributing to Staffordshire County Council's vision; a framework within which we can promote equality for, and prevent discrimination against, people of different genders as users of our services, as our employees and member of the community. Some of our objectives will include:

- Positive Action to address under-representation of women at senior level within our organisation.
- Work with local Carers Association to identify specific issues for carers.
- Promoting the provision of Child Care vouchers to ensure that they are taken up by both men and women.
- Continue to run Springboard training (personal development for women) and to re-launch the Navigator training (personal development for men).
- Increase support and improve safety of survivors of domestic violence and their families
- Further involvement with the Trans community to identify the priorities and barriers that they face, which will then be included as relevant targets in our action plans.

These objectives will be further developed when we have involved people at the focus groups we are arranging around the Council. This will then inform us of any gaps we need to address.

5. Engagement

We recognised from the outset, that to create a Scheme that really made a difference to the people of 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 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 Trans community, we have recently become sponsors of the Gender Advisory Bureau who provide Trans training, consultation and who will assist with the facilitation of our involvement activities.

Feedback from the events will be forwarded to all 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.

6. Employee Involvement

We undertake a staff attitude survey every two years, to establish staff views on working in and for the Council to help senior management identify areas of particular weakness and strength and so develop remedial actions, where necessary. In terms of equality and diversity, the survey enables us to identify how many of our staff are aware of our Harassment and Bullying Policy and if they are aware of the procedure we have in place to enable them to report discriminatory incidents. It also provides us with data on the number of employees who have experienced discriminatory behaviour, either from colleagues or from service users. The information will be used

to inform our Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan, and will enable us to target training and the marketing of our reporting systems more effectively.

We also run an in-house Best Practice Club, which aims to share best practice on different subjects across the county council. The sessions aim to be informal and involve people getting together to hear presentations, discuss topics and share ideas of good ways of working.

In addition, we hold regular HR Conferences, which are targeted at Human Resources practitioners from across the authority. This enables communication of corporate initiatives and priorities, as well as feedback from HR staff and managers. The HR Conference will be one method we use to ensure that gender priorities are mainstreamed and that our Gender Equality Scheme informs employment practices to ensure that they are fair, equitable and consistent across the organisation.

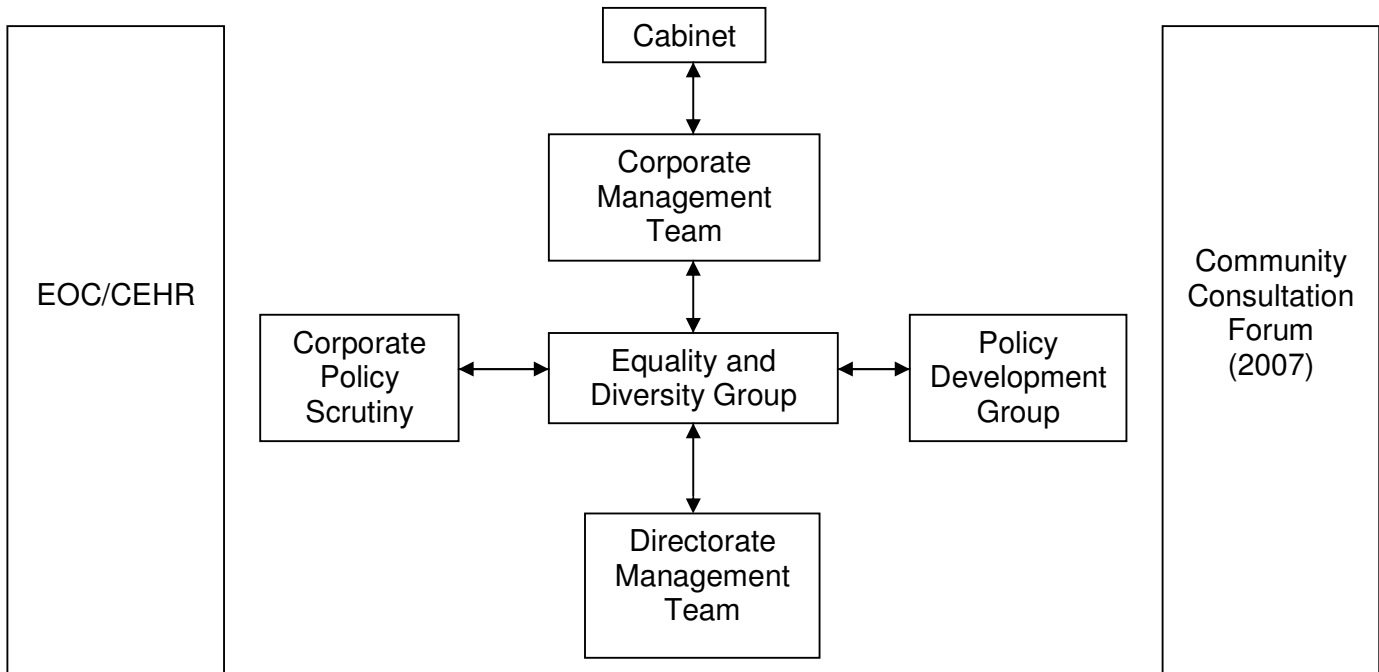
We will publish our Gender Equality Scheme and action plan on our intranet site and encourage feedback from our staff. We will also include articles in our staff magazine, our directorate newsletters and Equality for All Newsletter inviting staff to be involved in the ongoing development of our Action Plan.

7. Achievements to Date

Staffordshire County Council already:

- operate a flexible working hours (flexitime) scheme to enable employees to choose, within certain limits, the times that they start and finish work and take lunch breaks.
- exceed the legislative requirement for paternity and maternity leave
- provide Child Care vouchers for all staff
- operate a Domestic Violence Policy for our staff which signposts to support for both males and females
- have successfully piloted the Aspiring Managers Programme to address under-representation of women at a senior level
- allocate Community Funding grants to enable community and voluntary groups to provide inclusive services and activities
- have extended our discriminatory incidents reporting to include gender and trans

8. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review



Equality and Diversity Group informs Directorate Management Team of equality and diversity priorities. Directorate Management Team then incorporate them into Directorate priorities. Equality and Diversity Group sets strategy and targets and conducts an internal self-assessment.

Policy Development Group has responsibility to oversee the development of strategy.

Corporate Management Team provides leadership and direction for the organisation.

Cabinet endorses the strategies and priorities.

Corporate Policy Scrutiny provides internal challenge and scrutiny.

Community Consultation Forum will provide the external challenge and accountability.

Equal Opportunities Commission will undertake enforcement of all Gender Equality Schemes.

Commission for Equality and Human Rights will replace the Equal Opportunities Commission at the end of the year.

9. 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.

Why do we carry out Equality Impact Assessments?

The SDA 1975 places a duty on Public Authorities to assess the impact of its policies and practices, or the likely impact of its proposed policies and practices, on equality for women, men and transgender people; this will be carried out in this Scheme through Equality Impact Assessments (EIA).

All Public Authorities are also subject to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and the equality dimensions of this assessment are being enhanced to ensure that any lack of progress in this assessment is addressed.

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.