

Denbighshire's Gender Equality Duty 2007 – 2010

Introduction

1.1 What is the Gender Equality Scheme?

The Equality Act 2006 amends the Sex Discrimination Act, creating the Gender Equality Duty, to place a statutory duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need:

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

This includes our core functions of policy development, service design and delivery, decision-making and employment, the exercise of statutory discretion, enforcement and any services and functions that have been contracted out.

The Gender Equality Duty is a form of legally enforceable 'gender mainstreaming' – building gender equality into the core business thinking and processes of an organisation. There are two parts to the Gender Equality Duty, the 'general duty' and the 'specific' duties'. The General Duty came into effect on 6th April 2007.

The Specific Duties require public authorities to:

- Prepare and publish a Gender Equality Scheme.
- In preparing a scheme, consult with employees, service users and others (including trade unions), take into account relevant information and have objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap.
- The Scheme should set out the actions the authority has taken or intends to take to gather information on the effect its policies

and practices have on men and women in employment, services and performance of functions, and to use this information to review the implementation of the scheme objectives.

- Assess the impact of current and future policies and practices on gender equality.
- Implement the scheme and actions within 3 years of publication.
- Report on progress annually.
- Review and revise the scheme at least every 3 years.

The details of the specific duties for Wales have yet to be finalised and are likely to be implemented in April 2008. However, the Equal Opportunities Commission in Wales recommend that public authorities in Wales publish a Gender Equality Scheme by 30 April 2007. This should outline the Authority's gender equality objectives and the action that is being taken to achieve them. In the interests of clarity and transparency the Scheme should be accessible to stakeholders.

As part of the duty, public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment in employment and vocational training for Transsexual people. In December 2007 public authorities will be under an additional duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on grounds of gender reassignment in the provision of goods and services. Our Scheme therefore outlines how the authority aims to meet these duties.

The Gender Equality Duty aims to make gender equality central to the way that public authorities work, in order to create:

- Better-informed decision-making and policy development
- A clearer understanding of the need of service users
- Better quality services which meet varied needs
- More effective targeting of policy and resources
- Better results and greater confidence in public services

A more effective use of talent in the workforce

Having due regard means that the weight given to the need to promote gender equality is proportionate to its relevance to a particular function. In practice, this principle will mean public authorities should prioritise actions to address the most significant gender inequalities within their remit, and take actions which are likely to deliver the best gender equality outcomes.

Explanation of Terms

The Equal Opportunities Commission describes the term ‘**sex**’ as the biological differences between men and women and the term ‘**gender**’ refers to the wider social roles and relationships, which structure men and women’s lives. Gender inequality exists in all aspects of society and refers to lasting and embedded patterns of advantage and disadvantage.

The Gender Equality Duty Code of Practice uses the term ‘**Transsexual**’ to describe a person, who intends to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment.

1.2 Objectives of the Gender Equality Scheme

The purpose of producing a scheme is to bring about greater equality between men and women and to mainstream equalities into all functions and services of the Council. This means we must focus on achieving outcome specific improvements in policies and the way our services and functions are delivered.

This scheme cannot address all areas of gender inequality in its first term. In deciding what our priorities should be in the first three years, we have taken into consideration feedback received from consultation with members of the public, staff, and stakeholders. We have also considered data we collect in carrying out our services and functions.

The priorities set out in our first scheme have been developed following an analysis of that information, and are based on both actual data collected and on our perceptions of areas of possible gender imbalance that we need to address. Our priority areas and objectives are:

1. Performance management – To ensure gender equality is mainstreamed into all key policies and functions through impact assessment and that consideration is made in all procurement and contract agreements for gender equality duty compliance.

2. Monitoring Information – To ensure that service delivery, service users, employment practices and employees are monitored regularly to enable us to identify any areas of imbalance which can be addressed.

3. Employment and Training - To ensure employment policies are free from discrimination and bias and they more closely meet the needs of our diverse workforce in the areas of recruitment, career progression, flexible working, dress code, conduct, childcare and training.

4. Service Delivery - To ensure that all Council services and functions are accessible to men and women, boys and girls and are free from unlawful or discriminatory bias, and that we promote gender equality at every opportunity.

5. Single Pay – To ensure that all employees receive equal pay for work of equal value.