



GENDER EQUALITY DUTY (Draft)

Hart District Council

Gender Equality Scheme

Foreword

Hart District Council is proud of its equal opportunities work and its status as an Equal Opportunities Employer. Our commitment is that we will maintain and build upon our record as an inclusive place, where all people whether resident or visitor are treated fairly, equally and with respect, where diversity is recognised as one of Hart's key strengths. Hart is a rural district which recognises the importance of social inclusion in all forms and works to ensure that a continuing community spirit is embraced.

1. The Purpose of the Gender Equality Scheme

1.1. The Equality Act 2006 created the Gender Equality Duty for the public sector. The GED has two parts to it, the "general" duty and the "specific" duty. The general duty requires the Council, in carrying out its functions, to have due regard for the need to:

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

1.2. To help meet its general duty, the Council has a specific duty to:

- Produce a Gender Equality Scheme identifying how the Council will meet its general and specific duties and setting out the gender equality objectives including any gender gaps.
- Gather and use information on how the Council's policies and practices affect gender equality in the workplace and in service delivery.
- Consult stakeholders – employees, Members, service users and others – and take account of relevant information.
- Assess the impact of Council services and proposed policies and practices on gender equality.
- Implement the actions set out in the scheme within three years, unless it is unreasonable or impracticable to do so.
- Report against the scheme every year and review it at least every three years.

1.3 External Service Suppliers

The GED also applies to functions which are carried out by external contractors as well as those which are carried out directly by the Council itself. Legal liability for meeting the duty remains with the Council, which is expected to take action to ensure contractors meet the requirements of the duty.

1.4 This scheme has been produced using priorities set by the Council's strategic plans.

1.5 The purpose of the scheme is therefore to:

- Show how the council will mainstream gender equality in all areas of its work
- Meet and go beyond its legal duties to make gender equality a reality
- Set out priorities on how they intend to tackle gender inequality, eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity between women and men

Hart Context

General Population of Hart

Some facts about women and men living in our area drawn from census/ data:

- Of the population of 61,655,000 there is a broadly equal gender split between females and males – 49% and 51% respectively.
- Women have a life expectancy of 83 years compared with men at 80 years.
- 21% of female are long term unemployed compared with 9% of males.
- More men (18%) than women (12%) occupy professional jobs.
- There are seven times more female than male lone parent households with dependent children, (1099 as compared to 132).

Hart District Council as an Employer

- 300 people are employed by Hart District Council
- 31% of the top 5% of earners are women
- Of the Council's 35 Councillors 35% are women
- There is a Cabinet of 8, 25% of which are women

2. Priorities

2.1. The Council sets its major priorities within the Corporate Plan. These are:

- *Working with our communities to ensure access to our services within a safer environment*
- *Enhancing the environment whilst providing for the needs of our local communities*
- *Improving services so they are high quality and value for money.*

2.2. Within the Corporate Plan HDC have made a commitment that in order to deliver the vision they will:

- *Embrace the diversity of our Community and Staff*
- *Avoid discrimination in all that we do*
- *Seek to ensure that our services are accessible to all regardless of age, disability, race or sex.*

2.3. The Council has also been worked with its partners on the Local Area Agreement. This also sets out priorities and targets, which the Council have to work with its partner organisations to deliver. The priorities for the local area agreement are:

- *Healthier Communities*
- *Children and Young People's needs*
- *Older People's needs*
- *Safer Communities*
- *Cleaner and Greener Communities*
- *Economic Development and Enterprise*

2.4. In addition, the actions within this Scheme also reflect the result of consultation with employees, members, service users and others – and take account of relevant information.

3. Access to Services

3.1. Achieving gender equality through service delivery

Equality and diversity are seen by the Council as central to the provision of all services. In order to ensure that services are accessible to both women and men the Council will:

- Monitor customers' satisfaction and use of services by their gender
- Assess whether there is an adverse impact by gender in the provision of a service or planned service
- Take positive action to address any inequality, disadvantage or discrimination
- Encourage women and/or men to use HDC services where evidence shows that either gender have a low level of take up of particular services.

3.4. Working with the communities to ensure access to services, within a safer environment

3.4.1. Encourage involvement of the whole community via consultation, debate and feedback via transparent processes

3.4.2. Recognise the diverse community needs and improve access to service

3.4.3. Work with partners to reduce crime and disorder and the fear of crime.

4. Employment

4.1 The Council's Equal Opportunities Policy states that:

All employees whether part-time, full-time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit, will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the Council.

4.2 The measures adopted by the Council include:

- A Training & Development Policy which provides access to training opportunities for all staff

- An annual Performance and Development review process where employees have a meeting with their line manager to discuss career development and training.
- Training on Equal Opportunities for all staff
- A bullying and harassment policy specifically aimed at diversity issues which includes details of nominated contact officers.
- A Recruitment policy which refers to the Equal Opportunities Policy and that all candidates must be given the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities regardless of race, sex, age, religion or disability.
- Provision for time off for special situations providing support to dependents in emergency situations. This is applicable to both men & women.
- Support and advice for carers
 - A flexible working hours scheme
 - Special leave for carers of sick relatives
 - Child care voucher scheme
- A 'whistle blowing' procedure, which extends the protection for employees who want to report bad practice without fear of being victimised as a result.

4.3. Equal pay review

4.3.1 The Council has undertaken an equal pay review. HDC have a legal obligation to comply with the Equal Pay Act and are also committed under the terms of the National Agreement.

4.3.2 The Council's Corporate Plan also contains a commitment to undertake an Equal Pay review.

4.3.3. The review identified the possible risks and the Council's our responsibilities relating to Equal Pay. It also helped to ensure there are pay structures which are fair and therefore greatly reduce the likelihood of pay gaps between jobs of equal value.

4.4. The Single Status Agreement, which came into force in 1997, affected the way in which former manual workers were paid, removing certain bonus schemes, and simplifying their pay structure. As a result of this, they were brought into the Job Evaluation Scheme, and re-graded. Since the full implementation of this Job Evaluation Scheme it has been necessary to carry out a review of equal pay, looking at the statutory aspect of gender.

4.5. The Trade Unions have been involved throughout the review, in order that all aspects of equal pay are properly examined, and that the review is carried out with their agreement and support.

4.6. In order to fulfil our commitment to carrying out the gender equality review we will:

- Undertake an equal pay audit every three years.
- Introduce a consistent approach to decision making on pay across the Council, so that inconsistencies and anomalies are reduced or eradicated.

5. Comments and Complaints

- 5.1. Members of the public who feel that they have experienced illegal discrimination in the way the Council has treated them may make a complaint through its Corporate Complaints procedure. All complaints are taken seriously and HDC will not tolerate any form of discriminatory behaviour. Monitoring complaints is another way of gathering information to see whether the council is meeting its equality duties.
- 5.2. The Members' Code of Conduct and Standards Committee deal with complaints about the conduct of elected members.
- 5.3. Members of staff who fear that they may have experienced illegal discrimination must alert the Council by using the grievance procedure.

6. The Equality Standard for Local Government

- 6.1. In order to deliver the overall commitments on equality and diversity, the Council has adopted the Equality Standard for Local Government. The Equality Standard includes the six equality areas covered by law; race, disability, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation and age.
- 6.2. The Equality Standard is not a legal requirement but has been produced to provide a framework through which local authorities can meet their legal obligations under anti-discrimination legislation. It has five levels of achievement:

Level 1 Commitment to a comprehensive Equality Policy

Level 2 Assessment and consultation

Level 3 Setting equality objectives and targets

Level 4 Using information systems and monitoring against equality targets

Level 5 Achieving and reviewing outcomes

The Standard is also about making equalities part of the council's day to day activities. In 2005 the HDC achieved level 1 of the standard and is currently working towards achieving higher levels of the standard in the future.

7. Equality Impact Assessments

- 7.1. An Equality Impact Assessment is a way of deciding whether a current or proposed policy, procedure, practice or service does (or may) have an "adverse impact" on some sections of society. The "adverse impact" may often be the result of not taking into account the needs of women or men, black and ethnic minority groups, disabled people, people's religion or belief, sexual orientation or age.
- 7.2. A number of equality impact assessments on policies and services have been carried out by the Council as part of the Service Planning process. Assessments will also be carried out on new policies and services as they are developed, and over time on all other existing policies and services. The Council's approach to Gender equality issues is that they will be considered alongside other equality issues when equality impact assessments are carried out.
- 7.3. Guidance and training have been, and will continue to be, provided to employees who are responsible for undertaking Equality Impact Assessments.

7.4. The results of equality impact assessments are reported to Cabinet.

8. Monitoring of the Scheme

8.1. This Scheme will be reviewed every three years. The Action Plan attached as Appendix A will be reviewed at similar intervals. Progress on the Scheme and Action Plan will be reported to Cabinet periodically.

GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME ACTION PLAN 2007- 2010

“to eliminate discrimination and harassment and to promote equality”

ACTION	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	RESPONSIBILITY	TARGET DATE
INTERNAL FACING				
<i>Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) to be reviewed and incorporate the gender equality duty</i>	<i>Up to date and regularly reviewed EIA's</i>	<i>Inclusion of updated EIA's in all service plans & 6 monthly production of EIA matrix</i>	<i>Community & Partnerships</i>	<i>Annually as part of the process Initial work by end of July 2007</i>
<i>Consult with staff and Members and incorporate feedback as appropriate</i>	<i>Informed staff and Members & documented audit trail</i>	<i>All staff and Members will have attended a briefing and/or received information pack</i>	<i>Corporate Equalities Group</i>	<i>September/October 2007</i>
<i>Cascade of information throughout council</i>	<i>Mainstreaming of GE considerations in daily business</i>	<i>Induction module Cabinet Report</i>	<i>Human Resources Corporate Equalities Group</i>	<i>As required September/October 2007</i>
<i>Cascade of information to all contractors and partners to ensure compliance</i>	<i>All contracts reviewed and expectations outlined with partner compliance agreed</i>	<i>Number of contracts reviewed Amount of information disseminated to contractors & partners Audit trail of process</i>	<i>Community & Partnerships Technical Services & Legal</i>	<i>Project scoping required</i>
<i>Employment policies and documentation to be compliant</i>	<i>All employment policies reviewed & all documentation compliant</i>	<i>Number of policies reviewed</i>	<i>Human Resources</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
<i>Identify and eliminate pay gaps</i>	<i>See Pay & Grading Review with revision 2010</i>	<i>Adoption of compliant Pay & Grading Scheme</i>	<i>Human Resources</i>	<i>2007/08 Review 2010</i>
<i>Employment documentation to have no gender bias,</i>	<i>All employment documentation to be</i>	<i>All reviewed & compliant</i>	<i>Human Resources</i>	<i>Complete</i>

<i>including towards trans-sexual staff</i>	<i>reviewed/amended where necessary</i>			
<i>HDC existing policies to be compliant</i>	<i>All existing policies to be reviewed</i>	<i>All policies reviewed & updated as required</i>	<i>Corporate Equalities Group</i>	<i>March 2008</i>
<i>HDC new/proposed policies to be compliant</i>	<i>All new policies to be reviewed for equalities requirements</i>	<i>All policies will have been reviewed for equalities at sign-off stage</i>	<i>Corporate Equalities Group</i>	<i>July 2007</i>
EXTERNAL FACING				
<i>Gather/collate data on communities, residents, businesses in Hart to establish baseline</i>	<i>Baseline data will be gathered as part of existing consultation exercises</i>	<i>Baseline data will be established</i>	<i>Performance & Democracy</i>	<i>September 2007</i>
<i>Cascade of information throughout community</i>	<i>Information on equalities duties to be publicised via various media – eg. web, Hart News, press releases</i>	<i>Communities in Hart area will have been informed about equalities requirements</i>	<i>Community & Partnerships</i>	<i>Ongoing programme</i>
<i>Consultation with communities & stakeholders</i>	<i>Consultation exercises to be carried out via LSP, CSP, HNC, Citizens Panel and other community events</i>	<i>Data and information about communities & stakeholders will be held</i>	<i>Corporate Equalities Group Community & Partnerships Performance & Democracy</i>	<i>Via consultation programme timetable</i>
<i>Establish a representative group of citizens and/or stakeholders and regularly consult with them on equalities issues</i>	<i>The council will hold regular consultative meetings with interested/affected parties</i>	<i>Number/frequency of meetings and actions arising and implemented</i>	<i>Corporate Equalities Group</i>	<i>Initial enquiries by July 2007 with further work to be scoped thereafter</i>
REVIEW & REFRESH				
<i>Ensure all Actions are completed and the Action Plan is reviewed annually/refreshed every three years</i>			<i>Corporate Equalities Group</i>	<i>Annually 2009/10</i>

