

West Dunbartonshire Council
Equality Scheme 2009-2012

Contents

1 Introduction

Crosscutting Approaches to Equalities

2 Consultation & Involvement
3 Employment
4 Service Planning & Monitoring
5 Impact Assessment
6 Procurement
7 Training
8 Communication
9 Challenging Harassment
10 Partnership Working

Individual Equality Strands

11 Race
12 Disability
13 Gender
14 New Protected Characteristics
15 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community

16 Equality in Education

Action Plan

Appendices:

A Summary of Legislation
B Public Authority General and Specific Equality Duties
C List of Relevant Policies and Functions

1 Introduction

Purpose of the scheme

1.1 West Dunbartonshire Council values the increasing diversity of our communities and is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and equitable outcomes for all of its citizens and service users. This involves

- understanding the diversity of the communities of West Dunbartonshire
- having policies and services to meet the needs and promote the wellbeing of the whole community
- involving diverse communities in the development of policies and services
- having fair and flexible employment practices
- encouraging participation in public life
- promoting good relations between diverse communities, and between those communities and the Council
- reducing harassment
- providing the public with information on the Council's progress in promotion of equality

1.2 The Equality Scheme 2009-12 sets out how the Council will meet these objectives in relation to the promotion of equal opportunities across the following aspects of equality – race, disability, gender, age, religion and belief, sexual orientation and transgender status.

1.3 The scheme replaces three previous schemes within the overall Equality and Diversity Strategy:

- Race Equality Scheme 2008–11
- Disability Equality Scheme 2006–09
- Gender Equality Scheme 2007–10

1.4 The three previous schemes have been drawn together into the single Equality Scheme to provide a more coherent approach to the promotion of equality and diversity. The statutory duties to promote race, disability and gender equality will continue to be the main focus of its approach to equalities, but the scheme identifies the new demands in other areas of equality that are associated with forthcoming legislation.

1.5 Some concern has been expressed that a single equality scheme may result in a loss of focus on specific equality issues and be to the detriment of, for example, the disabled or black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. The scheme has been structured to maintain focus on each of the equality areas, to identify relevant actions, and to ensure that particular groups' needs and priorities have been recognised.

1.6 The scheme will continue to address the Council's current statutory duties and will provide the basis for anticipated changes in legislation. It has been developed in line with the Equality and Human Rights Commission's guidance on single equality schemes.

Integration of previous schemes

1.7 Each of the three previous schemes had a different timeframe. The start of the new scheme coincides with the end of the Disability Equality Scheme, 2006-9. The Gender Equality Scheme 2007-10 was reviewed a year early to bring it into line with the new scheme. The Race Equality Scheme 2008-11 has been amalgamated as it stands into the new scheme.

Structure of the Scheme

1.8 The scheme comprises four main sections:

- Cross-cutting approaches which should underpin the Council's promotion of all strands of equality. This includes training, impact assessment and employment.
- Approaches which relate to specific equality strands, for example the work to challenge violence against women and the work on disability access improvement.
- Equality in Education
- Action Plan

The scheme is supported by appendices providing background information

Reporting and Review

- 1.9 The scheme will be reported to Council in a corporate 'Equality Report' in November 2010 and 2011, with a review of the scheme in 2012. The arrangement will meet the Council's current race, disability and gender duties. It is recognised that this timetable may be overtaken by the enactment of the Equality Bill which may require some revision of the scheme in 2011.

Action 1

The Council will report the progress of the Equality Scheme in an annual 'Equality Report' at the end of each calendar year.

- 1.10 Services will report on the progress of their equality objectives through their service reporting mechanisms.

Assessing Performance

- 1.11 The Council recognises the value of having a framework by which it can assess its approach and performance in relation to the promotion of equal opportunities. One option is to adopt the Equality Framework for Local Government which has been developed by the Improvement and Development Agency for English and Welsh local authorities. The Council will evaluate whether the Equality Framework should be used as an assessment framework, and if so will draw up an action plan to achieve this.

Action 2

The Council will consider the use of the Equality Framework for Local Government as the means to assess its performance in promoting equal opportunities.

Legislative Context

- 1.12 The scheme reflects three key pieces of legislation:
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
 - Disability Discrimination Act 2005
 - Equality Act 2006
- 1.13 These Acts set out broadly similar general duties for public authorities to promote equal opportunity and eliminate unlawful discrimination, and set out a range of specific duties designed to support these general duties. The scheme is designed to meet these duties. Appendices A and B provide a more detailed account of the legislation and the general and specific duties. Where the duties associated with one equality strand set a higher standard, then the scheme should represent a levelling-up to that standard. The requirement for an education authority scheme is reflected in the 'Equality in Education' section (Section16) of the scheme.
- 1.14 At the time of publication of the scheme, a Bill is at Parliament to consolidate equality legislation and to set out a single Equality Duty for public authorities. A new public authority duty is likely to be introduced in 2011, and the scheme would be reviewed and revised in response to this.

Action 3

The Scheme will be reviewed and revised in response to anticipated changes in legislation.

West Dunbartonshire

- 1.15 West Dunbartonshire has a population of 91000 which is projected to continue to reduce, with an increasing proportion of people aged over 65. The 2001 census figures showed that over 21000 people (23%) had some form of limiting lifelong illness or disability.
- 1.16 At the 2001 census, black and minority ethnic (BME) groups formed less than 1% of the population though this is likely to have risen. The BME community is made up of a number of ethnic groups and is widely dispersed across the area, with some local clusters, and is expanded by people travelling to work or owning local businesses in the area. Although the BME community forms a very small minority of the population, the Council's response is based on their needs rather than their numbers.

1.17 Women in West Dunbartonshire outnumber men by 53% to 47%, and have a life expectancy of 77.1 years compared to 70.7 years for men. There is a 50/50 gender balance in the labour market though the average wage for women is only 81% of that for men, mainly due to the higher rate of part-time working. Women make up around 70% of the Council's workforce.

The Council

1.18 West Dunbartonshire is served by a Council of 22 elected members and around 6500 Council employees organised into five directorates:

- Educational Services
- Social Work and Health
- Housing, Environmental and Economic Development
- Corporate Services
- Chief Executive

1.19 The Council has clustered its objectives around six corporate themes and has identified the objectives of promoting equal opportunity as a service provider and as an employer as part of the theme of 'an improving Council'. The Equality Scheme is the primary vehicle for meeting these objectives.

Equality Structures

Policy Development

1.20 The Chief Executive's Policy Unit is responsible for development of equality policy. Corporate Human Resources leads the development of equalities policy and practice in employment.

The Equality and Diversity Working Group

1.21 The Council's Equality and Diversity Working Group (EDWG) has the responsibility for overseeing the development and delivery of the Council's equality scheme. It is made up of elected members, service managers and policy staff, and is chaired by the Council's spokesperson on equality and diversity issues. The Working Group reports to the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee which has delegated responsibility for equality issues within the Council.

The Equality Liaison Group

- 1.22 The Equality Liaison Group has developed out of the former race and gender equality groups and now addresses all of the equality strands. It involves departmental staff, trade union representation, community representatives and policy staff, and provides the opportunity to identify and work on potential initiatives and joint working across services. Its agenda has included the equality training programme, monitoring arrangements, guidance for managers and the development of community links.

MARIM

- 1.23 The Multi Agency Racial Incident Monitoring (MARIM) is led by the police and was originally established to bring together community partners to help monitor and tackle racist incidents in the local community. Its remit has recently been extended to deal with homophobic incidents. It meets quarterly, and additional meetings can be convened at short notice to deal with emergencies.

Gypsy Traveller Corporate Forum

- 1.24 The Gypsy Traveller Corporate Forum was established in 1999/2000 to co-ordinate council services for the Gypsy/Traveller community. As the role and remit has developed it has increasingly become involved in working with partner organisations.

LGBT Equalities Network

- 1.25 The network was established to carry out short and long-term aims and is open to representatives from local statutory and voluntary sector organisations that are supportive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) equalities issues. In the long term, once community consultation and engagement exercises have been completed, it is hoped that membership will be widened to include representatives from the local LGBT community.

Disability Working Group

- 1.26 The Disability Working Group (DWG) provides a forum for community representatives and Council officers to identify and consider key disability issues and, in particular, the impact of mainstream policies and services on disabled people.

Crosscutting Approaches to Equalities

Much of the Council's work to promote equality of opportunity is directed at equality issues as a whole rather than on specific strands such as race and disability. The trend toward 'crosscutting' approaches to equality reflects, firstly, the extension of the Council's statutory duties across a wider range of equality issues. Second, there is greater efficiency to be achieved in developing approaches which cover all aspects of equality and in which there are often common themes. Third, there is recognition that individuals cannot be defined in terms of a single characteristic but are each affected by a range of factors such as age, gender, belief and sexual orientation. This section of the scheme sets out these crosscutting approaches.

2. Consultation & Involvement

- 2.1 Consultation and involvement is such an important aspect of the Council's promotion of equality that the Equality Scheme will include the development of a Consultation Plan, drawing together its objectives for engagement with the local community and with its own workforce, and identifying areas for development. Consultation with the workforce is addressed in Section 3 on Employment, and this section focuses on consultation and involvement with the local community.
- 2.2 Engagement on the Council's approach to equality issues reflects the Council's Community Engagement Strategy, which is based on national guidelines and which sets a consistent standard for partnership working. It establishes key processes including a consultation recording system, a consultation network for officers, and a training programme to support employees in the use of best practice. It provides the basis for a range of involvement mechanisms appropriate to different people and needs within our communities.
- 2.3 The Council maintains a database of over 250 local groups that can be consulted on a range of issues. Groups from the disabled and BME communities are supported in their representative role by the Council's Community Work Team, Community Learning and Development Team, and by the local Council of Voluntary Service. However, the Council recognises that further work has to be undertaken in engaging with the small but diverse black and minority ethnic community.

- 2.4 The West Dunbartonshire Partnership's Citizens' Panel has become an increasingly important source of information on the community's opinions and priorities. The panel provides the Council and partner organisations with the opportunity to get a response on the needs and priorities of service users, and feedback on performance. The panel has a membership over 1400 and broadly reflects the demography of the Council area. Male members comprise 43% of the panel, compared to 46% of the population. Disabled people comprise 28% of the panel, compared to 23% of the population. Panel members tend to be older, with 39% aged 60 or over, compared to 28% of the population. Only 1.1% of panel members are from the minority ethnic community, though this compares to less than 1% in the population as a whole. The results of all of the citizen's panel surveys can be analysed by gender, disability, age and race, though breakdowns based on race are of limited validity because of the small number of panel members from the BME community.
- 2.5 The Citizens' Panel is managed by the West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership whose members have a shared interest in consulting and involving minorities. The Council will support the partnership in its work to engage with the community on equality issues.
- 2.6 The Community Participation Committee provides a focus for the Council's approach to community engagement. It consists of elected members, Council managers and community representatives, and includes representation from the BME and disabled communities. The committee's role is to oversee the Council's approach to community engagement and, because of its broad representation, can itself be used as a means of consultation.
- 2.7 Most of the key consultation exercises undertaken by the council can be analysed separately for responses by gender. The employee survey and citizens panel in particular offer a rich source of data. Some initial work has been carried out to retrospectively review previous surveys, and it is intended to screen responses by gender as a matter of routine.
- 2.8 Not all equality strands are equally well served in the Council's approach to community consultation. The LGBT community which, by applying Government estimates, may amount to around 5% of the population has, as yet, no significant voice in West Dunbartonshire.

- 2.9 The scheme itself has been drawn up in consultation with relevant stakeholders. The objectives for race equality were subject to consultation prior to the formulation of the Race Equality Scheme 2008-11 and followed up by further consultation and a focus group on BME issues. Representative groups from the disabled community have been closely involved in identifying objectives. The gender scheme, and in particular its objectives in relation to the key goal of challenging violence against women, reflect input from women's groups.
- 2.10 In education, a consultation exercise was conducted with a wide range of stakeholders included children and young people, school staff, education directorate, union representatives, parents and carers, quality improvement managers, human resources and equality representatives.

Action 4

The Council will draw up an Equalities Consultation plan in line with its Community Engagement Strategy.

Action 5

The Council will use the Citizens Panel and other partnership approaches to provide an equalities perspective on a range of issues.

Action 6

The Council will seek to identify the means to extend consultation with the BME community and LGBT community.

3 Employment

- 3.1 The Council has taken a variety of actions on a broad front to ensure recognition of equality and diversity issues in employment and has put in place measures to build a diverse workforce and an inclusive workplace.

Supporting Structures and Processes

- 3.2 Corporate Human Resources (HR) supports and develops equality and diversity policies through a range of structures and report mechanisms. Regular meetings of the HR Professional Development group, and departmental and inter-departmental HR meetings, provide the opportunity for knowledge exchange and updates on case law and employment equality issues.

- 3.3 The Equality Liaison Group and the West Dunbartonshire Intra-agency Domestic Violence Group address issues which straddle employment and community. A range of leaflets providing employees with information and guidance on Council policy and procedures on equality issues will be completed as part of the communication plan supporting the Scheme.
- 3.4 All new and revised HR policies are screened for impact across equality strands and summaries of these assessments are included with relevant Council Committee reports, and published on the Council website.
- 3.5 Corporate HR provides regular reports to the Council's Equality and Diversity Working Group (EDWG) on all aspects of employment equality, including monitoring, training and recruitment.

Policies, Procedures and Guidance

- 3.6 Specific organisational guidance covering the role of managers and employees in supporting equality in employment will be provided and rolled out to improve practice and will be underpinned by training and awareness sessions. This will cover all equality strands and will be based on recognised good practice. This will be introduced in parallel with an overall Employment Equalities Policy.
- 3.7 The Recruitment and Selection process has been augmented by use of the national online recruitment portal for Local Authorities (www.myjobscotland.org.uk). The Council has worked to ensure that awareness of this new resource is high and that local resources such as libraries are utilised by those who do not have access to home computing. Paper applications remain available.
- 3.8 A programme of HR policy production and review is in place with a revised Dignity at Work (DAW) policy and procedure being put into place in 2008, facilitated by trained confidential contacts, investigators and mediators. The DAW policy covers all seven equality strands, and has been supported by awareness sessions for managers and employees.
- 3.9 The Council will continue to identify measures to challenge gender segregation and measures that will assist employees with care responsibilities, such as the introduction of a Child Care Voucher Scheme.
- 3.10 The Council is a member of the Employment Service's Positive About Employment ('Double Tick') Scheme and will maintain the commitments this involves in regard to disability employment in the areas of recruitment, selection, retention and consultation.

- 3.11 In April 2009, the Council signed a Local Employment Partnership (LEP) Agreement with Job Centre Plus aimed at identifying and targeting disadvantaged groups in local labour markets, including BME groups. The Council will work through existing networks to ensure that members of the BME community have opportunities for work experience, work placement and other initiatives available through the LEP agreement.
- 3.12 The Council has established a new Well Being and Attendance team, which works proactively with all directorates to improve employee wellbeing generally and ensure early intervention is put in place to address health or disability issues. To achieve this, the team works on a policy and operational level.
- 3.13 The recently expanded and improved occupational health provision for employees is an effective resource for employee wellbeing, and supports the Council's commitment to ensuring that reasonable adjustments are identified, implemented and reviewed. The Council is fully committed to ensuring that all potential sources of support such as Access to Work are integrated into the Council's Practice.
- 3.14 The integrated Workforce Management Information System to be introduced from April 2010, will aid early intervention in identifying issues and channelling support. An absence management pilot is already being carried out within the Corporate Services Department.

Equal Pay

- 3.15 A new employee pay and grading structure was introduced in March 2009 in response to the requirement for Councils to address historic inequalities in pay. The job evaluation process which was used in implementation of the new structure underwent an external Equality Impact Assessment and was verified as meeting the Council's Equality Duty.
- 3.16 The Workforce Management System will be used to monitor and review pay and grading structures in order to maintain the use and integrity of the Scottish Councils' Job Evaluation Scheme as used within WDC.

3.17 The Council's objective of addressing the gap between men's and women's pay was acknowledged formally in its equal pay statement in September 2007. The statement, which will be reviewed in 2010, is as follows:

Equal Pay statement – September 2007

West Dunbartonshire Council is committed to the principle of equal opportunities for all, in every aspect of employment.

As an employer the Council will continuously strive to treat all staff equally as individuals free from any prejudice or other bias and will take action to eliminate any form of discrimination it encounters.

As part of this principle all employees should receive equal pay for the same or broadly similar work, for work rated as equivalent, and for work of equal value.

With this in mind West Dunbartonshire Council will operate a pay and benefits system which is transparent, based on objective criteria, and free from bias.

In support of this commitment to equality in pay, West Dunbartonshire Council will:

- *examine existing and future pay practices for all employees to ensure that they comply with best equal pay practice and most current legislation*
- *carry out regular monitoring of the impact of these practices*
- *inform employees of how these practices work and how their pay and benefits are arrived at*
- *provide training and guidance for those involved in making decisions about pay and benefits*
- *consult on all changes to pay policy with trade union representatives*

Through these actions, West Dunbartonshire Council will aim to avoid unfair discrimination in its pay and benefits system and reward fairly the skills, knowledge and competences of all employees.

Action 6

The Council will review its equal pay statement in September 2010.

Equality Monitoring and Workforce Management

3.18 Accurate information is vital to the building and maintenance of a diverse workforce and an inclusive workplace. A new Workforce Management System going live in April 2010 will provide the Council with the means to develop and use the wide range of information that it already gathers on equality in employment. Data has been gathered on 'race', sex/gender, disability and age in the following areas of employment responsibility.

- Staff in Post
- Employment Applications
- New Starts
- Promotion
- Training
- Grievance
- Discipline
- Exit

3.19 This data is already used to produce annual employment equalities reports, including comparisons with the local community and relevant labour markets. The new Workforce Management System will enable it to be used to ensure that workforce planning, and associated targets, are in line with the Council's equalities commitments. The system will be used to record adjustments to take account of the needs of disabled employees.

Employee Surveys

3.20 Employee Surveys are carried out every two years, with data from the 2007 and 2009 surveys being used to monitor progress and set targets. The percentage of respondents replying that they believed the Council's commitment to equality and diversity was 'good' or 'very good', increased from 46% to 58% between these two surveys, reflecting the training carried out since 2007 and the greater visibility of equalities in general. The Council has set a target of 80% for this figure by 2013, demonstrating the importance of this performance indicator.

Employment in West Dunbartonshire

3.21 The Council recognises that access to employment is a major contributor to equality. The Council works with other agencies and community representatives in the West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership to support unemployed people into jobs and training, and takes account of the need to respond to issues of disability, race and gender in this objective. The work includes specific projects to support people with learning disabilities and mental health conditions into employment.

Action 7

A revised Equality Employment Policy will be supported by guidance for managers and employees covering all equality strands

Action 8

The Council will support equality groups to have effective access to the recruitment portal.

Action 9

The Council will address harassment of employees through its Dignity at Work policy and procedures.

Action 10

The Council will monitor gender segregation and identify areas for action.

Action 11

The Council will promote the employment opportunities available through the LEP Agreement.

Action 12

The Council will use its Workforce Management System in the implementation of the Job Evaluation Scheme and to support equality across employment.

Action 13

The Council will use employee surveys to measure the impact of its promotion of equality issues in the workforce.

Action 14

The Council will take account of equality issues in its employment support programme.

4 Service Planning & Monitoring

- 4.1 Equality and diversity issues emerge across the full range of the Council's functions and services, and one of the core elements of the scheme is that each directorate will be asked to identify key equality objectives in its areas of responsibility and the means by which these will be taken forward. This will be in line with Joint Planning and Budget Guidance. These key departmental objectives should be based as far as possible on consultation with the local community, should correspond to the list of policies and functions (Appendix C) that have been identified as relevant to the Council's race equality duties, and should be supported by equality impact assessments (see Section 5). The Policy Unit will provide guidance on this process.
- 4.2 Departmental equality objectives should be included in service plans and in Covalent, the Council's performance management system. The monitoring information associated with these key objectives will be used in the development of the Council's equality scorecard.
- 4.3 Monitoring the take-up and outcomes of Council services on the basis of equalities provides the Council with the opportunity to identify any imbalance in provision and to take action to rectify this if necessary. An equalities scorecard has been drawn up consisting of equality measures in nine key 'domains' of Council responsibility, including education, housing, community care and employment. This is intended to provide an overall picture of the Council's progress in the promotion of equal opportunity. A number of the measures in the scorecard have still to be fully developed and additional measures will be added as the scorecard continues to take shape. A summary of the results from the scorecard will be included in the annual equalities report and in public performance reporting.

Action 15

Each directorate will identify key equality objectives within its area of responsibility, and the means by which these will be taken forward.

Action 16

The Council's equality scorecard will be developed to provide an analysis and report on the equality of provision in key services.

5 Impact Assessment

- 5.1 The assessment of the impact of policies and services on 'equality' groups is a core element in the Council's promotion of equal opportunities and the means to mainstream equalities into strategic policy objectives. An integrated approach to impact assessment, focusing on race, disability and gender equality, along with health improvement, has been developed, and is set out in the Council website, along with the results of completed assessments. The assessment framework will be extended in response to guidance on the forthcoming Equality Act to include a wider range of equality strands.
- 5.2 An impact assessment procedure has been developed and around 80 staff, mostly of section head grade and above, have had training. Guidance for officers writing committee reports has been produced, and elected members have been asked to take account of the need for impact assessment in their scrutiny role.
- 5.3 Following a statement from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, senior management has been briefed on the requirement to carry out impact assessment on key financial decisions. This will be put in place.
- 5.4 Some initial work has been carried out to develop the links between impact assessment and the Public Service Improvement Framework, which has been identified by the Council as its preferred approach to service improvement. These links will be developed further, in line with the work being carried out by the Improvement Service.
- 5.5 A report agreed by the Corporate Management Team in May 2009 recommended that a minimum number of assessments per year should be carried out, with an emphasis on key areas of policy and service provision.

Action 17

The impact assessment process will include key financial decisions and will be extended to take into account of a wider range of equality strands, with a minimum number set.

Action 18

Further work will be carried out to link impact assessment with the PSIF improvement framework.

6 Procurement

- 6.1 A significant proportion of Council services are contracted-in rather than supplied directly, and it recognises that its duties for equality of service extend to this external provision. Good procurement practice should be consistent with equality policies. A policy and procedure have been drawn up to enable Council services to apply equality principles and practices to contracted-in services and these will be rolled out as part of the equality scheme.

Action 19

The Council will roll-out guidance and procedures for equality in procurement.

7 Training

- 7.1 The Council recognises that employees' awareness of equality issues, policies and procedures, and of their own responsibilities, plays a major part in the equality of service provision and the overall quality of service. From June 2007 to June 2008, a member of staff seconded from the Community Learning and Development service delivered training for a substantial number of employees and provided the opportunity for the development of training materials which can be amended to fit the needs of different staff groups and work patterns.
- 7.2 Staff from Human Resources and the Policy Unit provide equality training as part of the induction training for new staff, and for a limited number of other staff groups, with an annual target set.
- 7.3 Face to face training is supplemented by the availability of on-line training, mainly suited to the needs of service managers, and annual target for this is set.
- 7.4 Training will be supplemented by the provision, as described in Section 8, of guidance on the responsibilities and rights of the Council's employees in respect to equalities.
- 7.5 The Council's Performance and Development Planning (PDP) system provides the opportunity for employees to discuss their training needs with their line manager and access additional equality training where appropriate.

- 7.6 The Council has therefore made significant progress with its responsibility to provide staff with equality training, and will continue to monitor this. It will continue to try to identify the approaches and resources that will meet the training needs, and will draw these together in an Equalities Training Plan. The plan and its progress will be reported through the Equality and Diversity Working Group and will take account of the range of the issues that should be addressed, service objectives, the roles that employees have within the Council, and the resource issues involved.

Action 20

The Council will continue to provide face to face and on-line training, and set annual targets.

Action 21

The Council will draw up an equalities training plan.

8 Communication

8.1 The Council's goal of promoting equality and diversity is dependent on its capacity to communicate its objectives to the public and to its own workforce, and the Equality Scheme includes the development of a communication plan for the promotion of equality. The plan will address how the Council will reflect equality issues in the way it communicates and in the information it provides. It will refer to communication within the Council and across the wider community, with particular reference to the need to communicate with specific groups such as minority ethnic communities.

Communication Standards

8.2 The Council recognises that all of its publications should be of a standard which enhances the opportunity for all stakeholders to access information and has brand guidelines to support this goal. The Council's publications standard will embrace standards such as those set out in the RNIB 'See it Right' campaign and will provide the assurance that material will be available in alternative formats and in community languages.

8.3 The Council has published 'Communicating Effectively', a guide to communicating with people from ethnic minorities and with disabled people, including information on the resources available. It has reinforced this guidance by publication of procedures for the use of alternative formats, interpretation and translation. The guidance will continue to be promoted across the Council.

8.4 The Council has a contract with a telephone interpreting service which enables staff to access an interpreter whether the service user is in a Council office or is in contact by telephone. Use of this and other interpreting services is monitored to identify patterns of demand, and an assessment of their effectiveness will be carried out.

8.5 The Council is committed to providing information to people in a format which meets their needs, where this is feasible (see 11.2). It has been in discussion with groups representing people with visual impairment about how people's needs can be recorded by Council services as a prompt to enable information such as letters and forms to be sent out in the appropriate format. If possible, this approach will be extended to the recording of the needs of people whose first language is not English.

Information for the public

8.6 The Council has already published summary leaflets on its former Race and Gender Schemes and these will be updated and extended to include its approach to disability equality and its wider equality objectives. Their purpose will be to provide service users with an understanding of the Council's approach to equality, and with information on how they can influence policy and the delivery of services.

8.7 Information on the Council's performance in meeting its equality objectives will be published on the web and in the local press and, will be presented as part of an annual Equalities Bulletin.

Information for elected members, managers and employees

8.8 The Council's equality objectives will succeed only if its leaders, managers and employees are aware that they exist and what their role is in achieving them. Equality Briefings keep elected members and senior managers up to date with equality issues, and the training objectives set out in Section 7 will be supported by the publication of leaflets to provide employees with an understanding of their rights and duties in respect to equality in the provision of services.

Promoting Equality

8.9 It is well recognised that marginalisation and discrimination against social groups is encouraged by popular images which fail to reflect their existence or do so in the form of negative stereotypes. The Council has a part to play in redressing this imbalance through a positive account of the contribution that equality groups play in the community, and the presentation of non-stereotypical images.

Action 22

The Council will draw up a communication plan to support its equality and diversity goals.

Action 23

The Council will continue to promote 'Communicating Effectively' and corporate publication standards will reflect good practice in communication.

Action 24

The Council will seek ways to record people's communication needs so that these can be anticipated for subsequent contacts.

Action 25

The Council will complete the publication of summary leaflets for the public and its employees on its equality objectives.

Action 26

The Council will publicise its performance on equalities on the web and publish an annual Equality Bulletin.

Action 27

The Council will use its publicity material to promote positive, non-stereotypical images of equality groups.

9 Challenging Harassment

9.1 The Council has a wide range of policies and services which address harassment, abuse and exploitation in relation to equalities. It is an issue that is recognised as existing in the wider community and within the Council itself. The Council's work to challenge harassment includes:

- The Multi-agency Racial Incident Monitoring (MARIM) Group (see 1.24) has provided the focus for the response to racial harassment, and has extended its responsibility to monitoring homophobic incidents.
- The CARA (Challenging And Responding to Abuse) Project provides support, advocacy and counseling for women affected by domestic abuse and childhood sexual abuse.
- The Homecare and Housing Repair services provide Keysafe and Password schemes to enable elderly and disabled residents to use services without feeling vulnerable to exploitation or harassment.
- Within the Council, the staff survey (see 3.20) provides staff feedback on their experience of harassment and can link this to equality data, and the Dignity at Work Policy (see 3.8) represents a response to this issue.
- The Council's training programme (Section 7) addresses issues of harassment
- Education monitors incidents of harassment in schools (see 16.8)
- In Education, a number of initiatives have the objective of promoting positive relations

9.2 The breadth of the Council's response to issues of harassment, abuse and exploitation brings with it the challenge of measuring progress and identifying gaps. The scheme therefore includes the action of drawing together data and carrying out consultation on the impact of these measures on equality groups.

Action 28

The Council will consult with equality groups on the issue of harassment as part of its equalities consultation plan.

10 Partnership Working

10.1 The Scheme has already referred to the positive role of the West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership in promoting equal opportunities in community engagement and in employment creation. The partnership itself does not have public authority equality duties, but by acting on behalf of other agencies it inherits their duties. As the Council is the lead agency for the partnership, its Equality Scheme should include the measures it will take to support the partnership in the promotion of equality across all of its objectives.

10.2 The Partnership has set out its collective commitment to equalities and diversity in the Community Plan, 2007-17:

'We want to encourage and promote ... diversity and are committed to ensuring equal opportunities both in the workplace and accessing services in our communities. We are committed to combating all forms of discrimination and providing support mechanisms for people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.'

10.3 The Community Plan is taken forward through six community planning theme groups:

- Building Strong and Safe Communities
- Creating Attractive and Sustainable Living Environments
- Developing Affordable and Sustainable Housing
- Improving Health and Wellbeing
- Promoting Education and Lifelong Learning
- Regenerating and Growing Our Local Economy

10.4 The theme groups have completed an exercise to develop a range of multi-agency programmes that will deliver on relevant sections of the West Dunbartonshire Single Outcome Agreement and are based on key local priorities. There is an expectation that these programmes and associated work funded by the Fairer Scotland Fund, are equality proofed. There is a particular expectation that equality impact assessments will be carried out where appropriate and the Council will support these as necessary.

Action 29

The Council will assist community planning theme groups to review the equality issues in their objectives, and support equality impact assessments where appropriate.

Specific Equality Areas

This part of the scheme sets out the Council's approach equality issues which are specific to individual equality strands – race, disability and gender. Each section identifies specific actions in respect to each of these strands or highlights where the crosscutting approaches are of particular relevance to them.

11 Race

- 11.1 The Council's Race Equality Scheme 2008-11 has been amalgamated into the Equality Scheme 2009-12. All of the actions from Race Equality Scheme have been transferred into the new scheme either within this section or, for the majority of actions, in the sections which set out the Council's crosscutting approaches to equality.
- 11.2 The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 requires the Council to review the Race Equality Scheme in 2011, and unless forthcoming legislation changes this requirement then the race component of the Equality Scheme will be reviewed at that time.

Identifying the BME Community

- 11.3 In West Dunbartonshire we celebrate the increasing diversity of our population and we will ensure we provide information and services that meet the needs of those who live, visit and work in the area. This presents a number of challenges; primarily the need to identify the minority groups in West Dunbartonshire and to involve them in developing services.
- 11.4 The community is constantly changing, and the Council has to develop its services in order to recognise and meet its needs. The 2001 Census showed that 0.7% of the local population was from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, but there is evidence that this figure may have since increased, with further potential for growth through in-migration from neighbouring authorities.
- 11.5 Demand for services is enhanced by a number people within the travel-to-work area boosting the daily numbers, and the ownership of local businesses from outside the area.
- 11.6 Although the total size of the BME population is small, it is dispersed across the authority, with clusters in particular areas and evidence that there is a wide diversity of ethnic groups and languages. Another factor in its diversity has been the arrival of economic immigrants from the 'accession' countries of the European Union.

11.7 There are sources of information that the Council can use. A recent report by the General Register office identified a variety of data from a range of agencies and this can be supplemented by local sources including;

- Figures on use of interpretation services;
- citizenship ceremonies;
- English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) courses;
- employee monitoring;
- information from education and library services on language support;
- NI Registered workers

Action 30

The Council, along with its partner agencies, will take further steps to identify and develop links with the BME community as a means to ensure that appropriate services are in place.

Consultation and Involvement

11.8 In December 2008, a focus group from the Citizens Panel, supplemented by members of the Ethnic Women's Group and the Ethnic Minority Association identified a number of key issues which have been incorporated into the Scheme. These included the standards of interpretation and translation, the need for better dissemination of information to ethnic minority groups, the need to improve staff attitudes, and the lack of visible BME staff in the Council. However, further work is required to extend consultation and involvement more widely across the BME community.

11.9 The Ethnic Women's Group is well established and is supported through the community work team. Recent work has included supporting members to participate in elections, including voter registration, and in the development of language classes for their children.

11.10 The Ethnic Minority Association comes mainly from the Asian community, with more recent membership from the Polish community, and is supported by the Council of Voluntary Service. It organizes cultural events and has hosted other activity such as focus groups and presentations on subjects such as electoral democracy.

11.11 Community Learning and Development run English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, which provide the service with a valuable link with participants. There are currently 43 learners on the course, many of them referred by services such as housing and libraries.

Action 31

The Council will identify the means to extend consultation and involvement more widely across the BME community.

Translation and language services

11.12 Communication is a key issue in provision of effective services to the BME community, and the council has contracts to provide interpretation and translation support. However, uptake of these is low and the Council will carry out an assessment of their effectiveness.

Action 32

The Council will assess the effectiveness of its interpretation and translation services.

Racial Harassment

11.13 The Multi-Agency Racial Incident Monitoring (MARIM) group is led by the police and has been the focus for the response to racial harassment in West Dunbartonshire. It still provides a focus for partnership working in response to racist incidents, but the numbers of referrals has tended to be small. As the issue of harassment has been recognised in other equality legislation, it has become the focus for a wider range of activity and is addressed as a 'crosscutting' theme in Section 9 of the Scheme; Challenging Harassment.

Relevant Functions

11.14 The Council has a specific duty to provide a list of the functions and policies which it has assessed as relevant to the general duty to promote race equality. This provides the basis for departments to identify the services requiring impact assessment. The list, which is set out in Appendix C, was reviewed in 2008 as part of the review of the Race Equality Scheme and will be reviewed again in 2011.

Action 33

In 2011, the Council will review the list of policies and functions which are relevant to its race equality duties.

Accounts Commission

11.15 The Accounts Commission performance study report '*The impact of the race equality duty on council services*', published in November 2008, concluded that while councils had developed policies on race equality and many had taken a range of initiatives, the race equality duty had not had a significant impact on the delivery of services or on people from minority ethnic communities. The report made recommendations to help councils improve their performance and these have been taken into account in the Scheme.

The Gypsy/Traveller Community

11.16 West Dunbartonshire has recognised its responsibilities to its Gypsy/Traveller community for many years and in 2008 published a Gypsy/Traveller Strategy and action plan, under the supervision of its Gypsy Traveller/Corporate Forum, to draw together its policies and procedures in respect to this ethnic group. The action plan was reviewed and updated in 2009.

11.17 Gypsy/Traveller communities are a legally recognised minority ethnic group. A 2007 study identified 270 Gypsy/Travellers living in West Dunbartonshire, representing the highest concentration per head of population of any local authority in Scotland.

11.18 The Gypsy/Traveller Strategy addresses a wide range of issues including:

- Accommodation and housing needs
- Delivery of key services
- Employment and welfare issues
- Education
- Consultation
- Unauthorised encampments

Action 34

The Council will promote equality for the Gypsy/Traveller community through its Gypsy/Traveller Strategy.

12 Disability

12.1 The final report on the Disability Equality Scheme 2006-9 showed progress over a number of key areas which are specific to disability, including involvement of the disabled community, the development of a disability profile, improvement to access and measures to combat harassment. In most cases, the work carried out under the 2006-9 Scheme is being continued under the new Scheme.

Disability Profile

12.2 The Council has published a Disability Profile which gathers together information on disability and impairment in West Dunbartonshire and is intended to assist local agencies to plan their services to take into account the needs of the disabled community, and 'disability' groups to support their representative role. The profile will be updated every two years as part of the equalities communication plan (Section 8).

Consultation and Involvement

12.3 The Council supports a number of groups representing disabled people to have their say on a wide range of issues, including the way which Council services impact on disabled people. The Council's Disability Working Group provides a forum for community representatives and Council officers to consider these issues in more detail. The group is chaired by a member of the community and has expanded over the period of the previous scheme to provide wider representation.

12.4 In addition to the ongoing contact with local groups, the formulation of the Equality Scheme was preceded by a series of meetings to review their response to Council services and to consider areas for improvement. The involvement of disabled people in the formulation of the scheme has contributed to the following initiatives:

- Identifying buildings requiring access improvement
- Walking audits
- 'Clear the way' campaign
- Password scheme
- Development of 'Shopmobility'
- Arrangements for alternative formats

- 12.5 In Social Work and Health services, the Joint Community Care Planning Groups provide a forum for consumer groups and the statutory agencies to agree joint community care plans and their implementation. They help to build effective working relationships in which consumers' views and expertise is used to highlight problems and gaps in services, influence service delivery and contribute to monitoring and evaluation of projects.
- 12.6 The West Dunbartonshire Partnership's Citizens' Panel (see 2.4), of which 28% of members have identified themselves as disabled provides the opportunity to see how Council policies impact on disabled people in comparison with the community as a whole. This is included in the equalities consultation plan (Section 2).

Action 35

Social Work and Health services will continue to involve service users through the Joint Community Care Planning Groups.

Participation in Public Life

12.7 The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 gives authorities the specific duty of promoting the participation of disabled people in public life, and the Council addresses this requirement in a number of elements of the Equality Scheme:

- The Community Development and Community Learning and Development teams support many groups of disabled people in a representative role.
- Communication standards and consultation practices (including the Citizen's panel) facilitate participation.
- Consultation with disabled pupils, supported by Education initiatives such as Glow and Viewpoint help to give a voice to disabled children.
- The walking audit initiative provides an opportunity for participation in environmental improvement.
- The Equality Scorecard contains a series of measures of participation by disabled people.

Access to Council Buildings and the Wider Environment

- 12.8 In the period 2006 to 2009, The Council's access improvement programme included work on 29 Council buildings and the Statutory Performance Indicator for access was increased from 34% to 50%. The programme responded to feedback from the disabled community and focused on the main Council offices and on buildings which support local communities, such as halls, centres and libraries.
- 12.9 Consultation with disability groups has suggested that while there is still a need for improvement in access to a number of Council buildings, there is greater concern about the hazards and inconveniences in pedestrian routes. The Council has established 'walking audits', in which disabled people accompany road engineers to inspect key pedestrian routes and identify the work required to make them more accessible, and these will be continued as part of the equality scheme.
- 12.10 One of the major difficulties that disabled people, and others, have with pedestrian routes are obstacles such as overgrown hedges and trees, cars parked on pavements, carelessly placed wheelie bins and dog fouling. Local groups have contributed to production of material for a campaign to persuade householder and motorists to be more aware of the need to keep pavements clear.
- 12.11 The Council, through the Community Development Team, has supported the formation of an alliance of local groups to initiate a Shopmobility scheme at Clydebank Shopping Centre. The Council will continue to support the initiative.

Action 36

The Council will continue to improve the accessibility of its buildings and services.

Action 37

The Council will carry out 'walking audits' as a means to improve its pedestrian routes

Action 38

The Council will undertake an awareness raising campaign about the need to keep pavements clear of hazards and obstacles.

Action 39

The Council will support the community initiative to form a Shopmobility scheme.

Access to Services

12.12 In addition to ensuring that its buildings are accessible, the Council seeks to ensure that services themselves do not exclude disabled people through measures such as additional support for the use of library services and home visits for applicants for housing benefits.

'A-Z' of Services

12.13 Consultation with the disabled community has identified the value of the Council publishing a guide on how the Council responds to the needs of disabled people and how services are adjusted to meet their requirements. The Council has identified funding to produce an 'A-Z' of services for disabled people and this will be published as part of the equalities communication plan (Section 8).

Action 40

The Council will provide an 'A-Z' of services for disabled people.

Self-Directed Support

12.14 Disability equality issues should be seen as fundamental to the way that public authorities provide care and support for disabled people, and the Council's Social Work and Health Service has recognised this in the promotion of its policy on self-directed care. Participants in self directed care are enabled to take independent control over the way in which they receive community care services, and are able to exercise choice over:

- what is to be done
- when it is to be done
- where it is to be done
- by whom it is to be done
- how it is to be done

12.15 Service users exercise this level of choice by having control of the expenditure on their care, and assistance in exercising this control. The service identifies the option of self-directed support in its assessment procedure, and will carry out awareness raising sessions with staff as a means to promote it as means of service delivery. The proportion of service users who use self-directed support is small, but the Council anticipates that this will rise as demand increases.

Action 41

The Council will promote self-directed support in its community care services.

Children with Disabilities

12.16 The Council's objectives in services for children with disabilities are set out in its draft Integrated Children's Services Plan 2009-12, and include the following priorities:

- Promote the principles of the Scottish Government policy "Getting It Right for Every Child" across services for children with disabilities to ensure that children get the help they need when they need it.
- Monitor and evaluate implementation of the Integrated Assessment Framework (IAF) to improve integrated assessment and care planning for children with disabilities.
- Conduct a needs analysis to identify gaps in services and ensure services are co-ordinated to promote more effective services.
- Improve transition planning and resource allocation between children's services and adult services.
- To promote equity of access to services across West Dunbartonshire.
- To monitor implementation of transition planning for children with disabilities and improve pathways between children's services across all levels of need.
- Promote Best Practice in inclusion of children affected by disability in sport, leisure and recreational activities and benchmark with other authorities.
- Implement the Consulting with Children and Young People: Practice Guideline, to improve engagement and participation of children and young people in individual care planning.
- Improve mechanisms for consultation with children, young people and families on service planning and development.
- Promote equal opportunities and diversity, by promoting a positive attitude towards children with a disability and maximising their participation in mainstream services.

Action 42

The Council will address equality issues for children with disabilities through its Integrated Children's Services Plan.

Promotion of positive attitudes

12.17 The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 gives authorities the specific duty of promoting disability equality, and the Council addresses this requirement in a number of elements of the Equality Scheme:

- The communication plan includes the use of publicity material to promote positive, non-stereotypical images of equality groups, including disabled people
- The Disability Profile presents disability in West Dunbartonshire within a broader context
- The Equality Bulletin reflects the contribution of disabled people to the community
- The 'A-Z' of services will highlight how the Council responds to disability
- Self-directed care gives disabled people control over the support they receive
- Training for staff provides them with an understanding of disability equality issues
- Work in schools addresses the challenge of developing the confidence, self esteem, knowledge and self advocacy skills of young disabled people.

13 Gender

13.1 A final report for the gender scheme 2007-2010 was reviewed a year early to bring it in line with the new Equality Scheme. The key objectives are still valid and are carried forward into the new scheme. The objectives apply in four areas of Council responsibility:

- Employment
- Service delivery
- Safety in the Community
- Education (see section 16)

Background

13.2 Independent research was commissioned by the Scottish Executive to provide a review of statistics on gender differences and inequalities in Scotland across a range of key areas of social and economic life: demographic and population change; participation in political and public life; education and training; the labour market; income and wealth; care and caring; health; crime and justice; housing; and transport.

13.3 The report found evidence of significant gender inequalities in some areas, mainly affecting women though sometimes boys and men are affected. A key finding was also that gender inequality is influenced by many factors rather than one single cause and interacts with socio-economic circumstances, ethnicity and disability.

13.4 This national report could produce a useful framework for developing an evidence based approach for corporate and community planning priorities in the local area. Information gathered from service monitoring within the council will be used to gather information over the 3 years of the scheme. Links will be made with other partners to develop this approach across partner agencies in West Dunbartonshire.

Action 43

Gather and present information on Council services from a gender perspective and make links with partner agencies with a view to developing a wider analysis.

Gender Equality in Employment

13.5 Gender equality issues are a major feature in the Council's employment policies and procedures which are set out in Section 3. They are reflected in the consultation on which policies and procedures are based; can be identified through the staff surveys, and are highlighted in the employment equality reports which go to the Equality and Diversity Working Group.

Support Measures

13.6 The council has introduced a Dignity at Work Policy (see 3.8) in addition to the existing grievance and disciplinary procedures, to address issues of harassment. A Flexible Working policy and a Childcare Voucher Scheme (see 3.9) are being implemented as part of the objectives relating to family friendly policies and practical measures to support childcare.

Action 44

The Council will address gender equality issues in its employment and HR policies.

Equal Pay

13.7 The Council's objective of addressing the gap between men's and women's pay was acknowledged formally in its equal pay statement in September 2007 and is set out in the Employment section of the Scheme (see 3.7).

Workforce Stratification

13.8 The Council has identified gender stratification in its workforce as a key gender equality issue. Gender stratification in the workforce can take several forms, but essentially it involves concentrations of a single sex around specific roles. Women dominate in key public sector workforces such as teaching, especially primary, NHS and local government, but are under-represented in senior positions. Men are dominant in areas such as construction, agriculture and transport.

13.9 Gender stratification also exists in earnings and patterns of work. In 2005, women full-time workers in Scotland earned 88% of male full time workers' average hourly pay, an increase from 72% in 1977. This wage imbalance is exacerbated by differential levels of part-time working with 41% of women working part-time, compared to 10% of men in 2005.

13.10 The council has made some progress in workforce stratification. It is among the top Scottish local authorities for recruiting women into top posts. At the same time it is taking steps to improve the gender imbalance in construction sector modern apprenticeships. The new HR system (see 3.18 & 3.19) will provide the basis for further analysis of the pattern of workforce stratification.

Action 45

The Council will use the new HR system to provide further information on the issue of workforce stratification by gender.

Gender Equality in Services

13.11 The Council has the responsibility to ensure that its services meet the needs of both women and men, and the three approaches it takes to this are impact assessment, service monitoring and consultation.

13.12 Equality Impact Assessments (Section 5) provide the means to ensure that gender issues are addressed in the development and implementation of Council policies and services. They do this by ensuring that policies and services take account of key gender issues such as access to health provision, childcare and community safety. Equality monitoring (Section 4) can be used to ensure that there is a balance in take-up of services between women and men.

13.13 Most of the key consultation exercises undertaken by the council, such as the Citizens Panel (see 2.4), can be analysed separately for responses by gender, and it is one of the standard measures in the Council's Equality Scorecard (see 4.3). However, effective consultation on gender issues within the community remains a challenge for the Council and is identified as an action in the scheme.

Action 46

The Council will develop its capacity for consultation in relation to gender issues in service provision.

Community Safety /Violence Against Women

13.14 Violence against women is a consequence of the continuing inequality between men and women, and is a barrier to achieving equality. It is a key gender issue. A local study in 2005, the first of its kind in Scotland, measured the high prevalence of domestic abuse amongst the general population and confirmed the national pattern that one in four women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.

13.15 In West Dunbartonshire, a total of 1385 incidents of domestic abuse were reported to Strathclyde Police in 2006-7. This represented a total of 1,518 incidents per 100,000 of population: the second highest in Scotland after Glasgow City.

13.16 The Council has its own inter-agency group to address issues of violence against women and supports the West Dunbartonshire Violence Against Women Partnership (WDVAWP) which has the strategic lead for tackling all forms of violence against women in West Dunbartonshire. The partnership operates in line with the national strategy '*Safer Lives: Changed Lives – A Shared approach to tackling violence against women in Scotland*' and addresses the four key objectives of Prevention, Protection, Provision and Participation:

- Provision: Improved services for women, children and young people, including Improved awareness among women, children and young people of local sources of support
- Increased protection for women, children and young people from male violence
- The prevention of violence against women, children and young people through a range of primary and secondary measures
- The participation of women, children and young people in development of local strategies, services and policies.

13.17 These objectives are supported by:

- Partnership working with members drawn from key agencies
- Training and workforce development
- Evaluation and monitoring of all aspects of the WDVAWP's work.

13.18 These objectives and approaches underpin a wide range of work to challenge violence against women in West Dunbartonshire, including

- Two Women's Aid groups providing support, advocacy and safe accommodation for women and their families affected by domestic abuse.
- The CARA (Challenging and Responding to Abuse) Project providing support, advocacy and counselling for women affected by domestic abuse and childhood sexual abuse.
- The Reduce Abuse Project working on awareness-raising among children and young people.
- The Women's Safety Service, providing support to women whose partners are in the criminal justice system as a result of domestic abuse.

Action 47

The Council will support an action plan through the Violence against Women Partnership.

14 New 'Protected Characteristics'

14.1 The Equality Scheme focuses on the 'statutory' equalities - race, disability and gender where the Council has public authority duties including the publication of an equality scheme. New legislation will extend protection to a wider range of 'protected characteristics' including age, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, and religion or belief, and will include these in public authorities' equality duties. The scheme already addresses LGBT issues through the work of the West Dunbartonshire LGBT Network (Section 15) and will be developed in line with guidance associated with the new legislation to ensure that the Council's approach to equality continues to meet legislative requirements and follow best practice.

Action 48

The Council will develop the Equality Scheme to include a wider range of protected characteristics in line with forthcoming legislation and guidance.

15 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Equality

Introduction

- 15.1 The Council recognises the importance of promoting equality of opportunity for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community as part of its Equality Scheme, and has identified the potential of the LGBT network as the means to achieve this, though initiatives such as the Dignity at Work Policy (see 3.8) show that this objective can also be addressed within the Council itself.

This section of the scheme provides an account of the network, its approaches and its aims, and sets out the actions which will be taken to support these.

The LGBT Community

- 15.2 *'LGBT people are estimated to make up around 5% of the population of Scotland, around 250,000 people across all parts of society. We are young and old, we are parents, we are single, in relationships, married or in civil partnerships, we are disabled people, we are school and college students, we are workers, we are religious and non-religious, we are of all ethnicities. Like everyone else, we contribute to Scotland's wealth, culture, society and future'*

Challenging Prejudice: Changing attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Scotland – 2008

- 15.3 There is no reliable measure of the LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire and there is no monitoring carried out on employees or services by the council. If the 5% figure was aggregated up then the LGBT community in West Dunbartonshire could be as high as 4,500. Applying the national figure however would probably over-estimate the size of the community as there are known to be higher concentrations in the larger cities.

Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Equalities Network

- 15.4 The Council promotes equal opportunities for the LGBT community through the West Dunbartonshire LGBT Equalities Network. The Network was established in October 2007 as a sub-group of the Community Planning Partnership and has a number of local partners including Youth Health Services, Y-Sort-It, the Violence Against Women Partnership, Strathclyde Police and individual council services including homelessness, Community Learning and Corporate Policy, as well as local elected members. The network's initial focus was the successful campaign, *'Celebrating Diversity Through Visibility'*.

15.5 The network is open to representatives from local statutory and voluntary sector organisations. In the longer term, it is hoped that membership will be widened to include representatives from the local LGBT community, once community consultation and engagement exercises have been completed. The network is represented on the Council's Equality and Diversity Working Group and on the Equality Liaison Group.

Objectives of the Network

15.6 The network aims to ensure that LGBT Equalities issues are prioritised as part of the Equality and Diversity Agenda in West Dunbartonshire and to achieve a safe and inclusive environment for LGBT people living and working in West Dunbartonshire, and better outcomes for LGBT young people in the area.

15.7 It will employ the following approaches:

- work on a multi-agency basis
- build membership and capacity to include representatives from local statutory and voluntary sector organisations
- consult with LGBT community members to identify local needs
- work closely with national networks
- develop the sustainability of the LGBT Equalities Network

Action to promote LGBT Equality

15.8 The network has identified the following aims as the means to promote LGBT equality, though it recognises that these will require prioritisation:

- To challenge homophobia
- To build the capacity of local services to support the local LGBT community and workforce
- To develop annual cultural calendar dates
- To develop the capacity of West Dunbartonshire community to support the needs of the local LGBT community
- To encourage the involvement of the LGBT community in the community planning process and to maintain the profile of LGBT equalities issues within community planning
- To identify and address the specific needs of LGBT young people
- To identify and distribute examples of good practice
- To assist partners to develop good practice models within their organisation
- To build LGBT awareness, knowledge and capacity locally
- To provide a supportive environment for local workers and community members.

National and Local Priorities

15.9 In 2008 the Scottish Government launched 'Challenging Prejudice: Changing attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Scotland'. An action plan will follow these recommendations, and the West Dunbartonshire LGBT Equalities Network will be pivotal in linking local delivery with the national priorities.

15.10 The network, however, has no dedicated resources to develop its action plan and a first task will be to cost proposals and secure resources to deliver the plan.

Action 49

The Council will support the LGBT network to identify priorities for its action plan.

Action 50

The Council will support the LGBT network to identify the resources required to carry out its action plan.

16 Equality in Education

- 16.1 Equality legislation requires Education Authorities to publish their own equality schemes, though they may do so as an identifiable section of wider schemes. The West Dunbartonshire Equality Scheme therefore contains this section which demonstrates how the Council equality objectives are taken forward within its education service.
- 16.2 All learners in West Dunbartonshire have an entitlement to an educational service which will support them in developing their values and beliefs and enable them to:
- achieve the highest possible levels of literacy and numeracy and cognitive skills
 - develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work
 - develop knowledge and understanding of society, the world and Scotland's place in it
 - experience challenge and success
- 16.3 The purpose of promoting equality and human rights in education is to not only eliminate discrimination but also to reduce inequality and build good community relations and thereby ensure that everyone has a fair chance to learn to the best of their abilities and to contribute to their community. Educational Services in West Dunbartonshire endeavour to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to develop as successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens regardless of race or ethnicity, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, disability or socio economic status.
- 16.4 The Education Equality and Human Rights Group (EEHRG) has been established to guide and monitor equality developments in education.
- 16.5 *Curriculum for Excellence* and *Getting It Right For Every Child* provide a framework for children to access appropriate curriculum and supports to enable them to thrive and learn. In doing so, they enable the authority to address equality issues.

Cross-cutting themes

16.6 The introduction of a single equality scheme enables cross-cutting themes to be addressed as a means of removing discrimination and promoting access for all.

Equality and inclusion

16.7 The authority will promote and ensure inclusion, equality and fairness by improving children and young people's knowledge, and understanding of their rights and entitlements in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Rights Respecting Schools Award is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and recognises that for children to learn they first have to feel included, that they belong and that they matter. Children learn that they have internationally recognised rights simply because they are a child and this provides a starting point for building self-esteem. The CRC is supported by all but two of the world's nations and by all major religions.

Action 51

The authority will pilot the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award to promote inclusion and equality and fairness.

Action 52

On successful evaluation of pilot, the authority will role out RRSA on a cluster basis supported by pilot schools.

Safety and Wellbeing

16.8 *Children and young people should feel happy, safe, respected and included in the school environment and all staff should be proactive in promoting positive behaviour in the classroom, playground and the wider school community. Robust policies and practice which ensure the safety and wellbeing of children should be in place.*

Curriculum for Excellence: Health and wellbeing across learning

- 16.9 All learners have the right to feel safe and it is only when they do that they can learn effectively. The authority recognises that prejudice-based bullying has to be challenged and will update the anti bullying policy.

Action 53

The authority will update the anti bullying policy to include prejudice-based bullying.

Involvement of and consultation with children and young people

- 16.10 One of the overarching principles of *Getting It Right For Every Child* is that children and young people should be at the centre and that their views listened to in any decisions that affect them. Although children may not have the experience or education of adult professionals, they are experts in how they feel and what they have experienced. It is the responsibility of professionals and organisations to find ways for these views to influence working practice. The importance of obtaining children and young people's views is now part of national and international legislation. The views of children should always be sought where decisions being made will affect them. *Curriculum for Excellence* states that a child can expect their learning environment to support them to understand that adults in their school have a responsibility to look after them and listen to their concerns.
- 16.11 Consultation with young people can be achieved through the establishment of a Glow group at authority level, accessible by both staff and young people. Glow is a national schools intranet for Scotland which supports the sharing of good practice in promoting equality by involving children and young people.

Action 54

The authority will support schools to implement practice guidelines on Consultation with Children and Young People and consider how GLOW can be used to share examples of effective practice and promote equality.

- 16.12 In order to improve consultation with children, West Dunbartonshire will implement Viewpoint. Viewpoint is an interactive software package, designed to aid children express their views and to encourage their participation. It consists of a series of questionnaires that children and young people complete with the help of a responsible adult. The questionnaires are displayed in an engaging dialogue with animated cartoon assistants. Young people have said that Viewpoint makes it easy for them to say exactly what they mean even about sensitive topics.

Action 55

The authority will further develop the use of Viewpoint in all schools to children and young people who would otherwise have difficulty expressing their views.

Involvement of and consultation with parents and carers

- 16.13 Parents, carers and family members are by far the most important influences on children's lives. Research shows that when parents are involved in their child's learning, children do better at school and throughout life. For some parents who themselves have a disability there may be obstacles to involvement which will have to be addressed.

Action 56

The authority will work with parents and carers to ensure the widest possible participation and to identify appropriate ways of involving them in policy decisions.

Action 57

The authority will develop a method of consultation with parents on equality issues including issues affecting children with a disability and the involvement of parents with disabilities.

Data gathering and equality monitoring

- 16.14 The understanding and appropriate use of robust data in relation to equalities strengthens evidence-based practice so that policy making, programme design and communication can be better informed. The EEHRG will have a role to play in monitoring and analysing the data gathered.

16.15 Equality monitoring in Education will be included in the corporate equality 'scorecard' which sets out how the Council as a whole has performed across its key areas of service. The education measures which have been identified for the Education and Lifelong Learning' domain of the scorecard include:

- Participation in pre-school education
- Attainment – SQA tariff at S4
- Leaver Destinations

Action 58

The authority will further develop data gathering and equality monitoring systems in relation to equality.

Impact assessment

16.16 Impact assessment is a continuous process to ensure the consequences of policies are fully thought through, and to present relevant evidence on the positive and negative effects of interventions on groups and individuals within the community. The Council has produced guidance on impact assessment, and has provided training for key staff, including education professionals.

Action 59

The authority will follow corporate guidance on impact assessment.

Training

16.17 To deliver a fair service for all it is necessary that staff have a basic foundation of knowledge, skills and awareness in order to appreciate the place of equal opportunities within a learning environment. A significant start has been made in providing training for education staff and this will be further developed, for example by supporting uptake of the Councils flexible online equalities training modules by key staff in influencing roles.

Action 60

The authority will continue to improve skills in awareness and understanding of equality issues.

Individual Strand priorities

16.18 In addition to the crosscutting approaches which promote equality and eliminate discrimination across all equality strands, some actions will focus on improving the wellbeing of specific groups of learners.

Disability

16.19 Consultation with children and young people with disabilities and their parents requires information sharing and dialogue between children and adults, which is based on mutual respect and power sharing. Genuine participation gives children the power to shape both the process and outcome. Improved consultation methods will lead to services that match the aspirations of our young people and those who care for them.

16.20 Working on the belief that it is social and physical barriers and not disability that prevents inclusion we continue to identify ways of removing such barriers. The accessibility strategy continues to tackle physical barriers but it is often social factors that are most difficult to identify and remove. In partnership with voluntary agencies a transition project will help reduce the inequality between young people with disabilities and their non-disabled peers during the transition from childhood to adulthood. The project will work with West Dunbartonshire young people between the ages of 13-18 as they begin to look at their life beyond school. This work builds on transition work already established in schools and considers the child's life and experiences as a whole.

16.21 The project will focus on two key components:

- 1) Development of a network of facilitators who will work with families to compile a transition plan. This future planning will help to develop the confidence, self esteem, knowledge and self advocacy skills of young disabled people in West Dunbartonshire.
- 2) Development of a 'buddy' volunteer befriending scheme to encourage social relationships. By facilitating participation in social activities the project will help disabled young people form social networks and thereby reduce social isolation

Action 61

The authority will implement the Transition Project in partnership with the voluntary sector.

Race and ethnicity

16.22 *Curriculum for Excellence* outlines an entitlement for all children to a curriculum which will support them in developing their values and beliefs and enable them to develop knowledge and understanding of society, the world and Scotland's place in it. Delivery of this entitlement in educational establishments will be supported through the curriculum and by the introduction of the Rights Respecting Schools Award, by inclusion of prejudice based bullying in the anti-bullying policy and by improved monitoring of incidents of racially motivated incidents as outlined earlier in the Education section of the Scheme.

Gender and Sexual Orientation

16.23 Improved data gathering and equality monitoring will help identify areas of need in, for example, subject uptake and attainment, and school leaver destinations.

16.24 West Dunbartonshire has led the way in developing a teaching resource on Sexual Bullying that is available for use in all Scottish schools. Sexual bullying includes gender-based and homophobic bullying; targeting someone because of their gender or sexual orientation. It can also include the use of language and the display of attitudes which create a hostile environment for all within school communities.

Action 62

The authority will promote the use of the Sexual Bullying pack in West Dunbartonshire schools.

Socio-economic disadvantage

16.25 *We will reduce the inequalities between the least advantaged groups and communities and the rest of society by ensuring that support reaches those who need it most.*

Scottish Government, June 2009

16.26 West Dunbartonshire shares the vision of a fairer society where every child has the opportunity to achieve their potential. We know that growing up in poverty has a negative impact on physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. It is therefore appropriate that educational services should focus on improving access to services for families living in deprived conditions as a way of tackling poverty and social exclusion. A partnership has been established between West Dunbartonshire and three other organisations in order to: create knowledge exchange mechanisms; promote inter professional working; coordinate policy and service delivery and thereby tackle social inequalities and provide better life chances for children living in impoverished circumstances.

Action 63

The authority will develop a knowledge exchange programme for improving the life chances of children and families in severe and persistent poverty through effective co-ordination between policy and local integrated service provision.

Action 64

The authority will conduct research into the link between social deprivation and life chances and then improve coordination of services in this area.