

West Dunbartonshire Council

Disability Equality Scheme 2006-2009

Gender Equality Scheme 2007-2010

Final Report

September 2009

1 Introduction

1.1 The report sets out the Council's progress in its Disability Equality Scheme (DES) 2006-2009, and its Gender Equality Scheme (GES) 2007-2010. Final reporting of the disability scheme complies with a specific equality duty, while the gender equality scheme is being reported a year early in order to allow an orderly progression into the forthcoming West Dunbartonshire Equality Scheme 2009 -2012.

1.2 The two schemes are being reported together because of the degree of common ground in the Council's approach to these two equality issues. The Council's Race Equality Scheme was reviewed and revised in 2008, and its annual update will be presented separately

1.3 The report is based on the updated action plans for the Disability and Gender Equality Schemes, which set out progress against each action and identify the work which will be carried forward into the new scheme.

1.4 The report summarises the 'crosscutting' measures which address both disability and gender issues and goes on to describe progress in work which is specific to the Council's disability and the gender duties. Legislation requires that the schemes reflect the specific role of the Council as an Education Authority, and the report therefore has a separate Education section.

2 Background

Legislation

2.1 The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 gives public authorities the general duty to promote disability equality and sets out a range of specific duties intended to support this general duty. These include:

- Publication of a Disability Equality Scheme and action plan for 2006-9
- Involvement of Disabled People in the preparation of the scheme
- Monitoring the employment and delivery of service to disabled people
- Assessment of the impact of policies and services on disabled people
- Review and revision of the scheme by 2009.

2.2 The Equality Act 2006 gives public authorities the general duty to promote gender equality and sets out a range of specific duties intended to support this general duty. These include:

- Publication of a Gender Equality Scheme and action plan for 2007–10
- Consultation
- The identification of priorities and objectives
- Monitoring the employment and delivery of service to women and men
- Assessment of the impact of policies and services on women and men
- Review and revision of the scheme no later than 2010.

2.3 The two pieces of legislation are therefore broadly similar, and the Council has developed structures which combine its response to both. These are set out below.

The Equality and Diversity Strategy

2.4 The Council's Disability and Gender Equality Schemes have been two of the components, along with its Race Equality Scheme, of its Equality and Diversity Strategy. The strategy has provided a basis for a shared approach to elements such as training, impact assessment, monitoring and reporting. The Equality and Diversity Strategy will be succeeded by the Equality Scheme 2009-12.

Policy Development

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

The Equality and Diversity Working Group

2.6 The Council's Equality and Diversity Working Group (EDWG) has the responsibility of overseeing the development and delivery of the Council's equality and diversity strategy. 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

- 2.7** 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, community representatives and policy staff, and provides the opportunity to identify and work on potential initiatives and joint working across services.

3 Crosscutting Approaches to Disability and Gender Equality

- 3.1** This section of the report provides an account of the progress of approaches which address disability and gender equality as part of the overall equality strategy.

Training

3.2 From June 2007 to June 2008, a member of staff seconded from the Community Learning and Development service provided equality training for around 1240 staff. This was supported by the development of training materials which could be used for a range of half day, full day and shorter tailored sessions to fit needs of different staff groups and work patterns. The material covers all of the current six equalities strands, with content that balances legislation and attitudes issues, and an understanding of how Council policies and procedures address equality. Training exercises assist participants to relate the material to their own experiences.

3.3 Since the end of the secondment in June 2008, staff from Human Resources and the Policy Unit have provided equality training as part of the induction training for new staff, and for a limited number of other staff groups. Over 200 employees have been trained under this new arrangement.

3.4 Face to face training has been supplemented by the availability of on-line training, with one module aimed at managers and supervisors and one aimed at front line staff. A total of 43 staff have completed these modules and take-up is increasing.

3.5 Core training has been supplemented by sessions tailored for particular groups, and training to support specific policies and procedures. New social work staff have received half day training and Skillseekers going into care roles have been given training in relevant equality issues. Initiatives such as the Dignity at Work policy and Impact Assessment have been supported by training.

3.6 The Council has therefore made significant progress with its responsibility to provide staff with equality training, but this has still not covered a majority of employees, and there is still a considerable way to go.

Employment

3.7 The Council has prepared guidance and procedures for managers in relation to all strands of equality, including disability and gender. These will contribute to an updated Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy to be implemented in October/November 2009, setting out how equality principles will be mainstreamed in employment-related functions such as workforce planning, recruitment, training, pay and conditions, and organisational change.

3.8 Recruitment and selection procedures and paperwork have been revised to ensure that they contribute to the business, ethical and legal requirements of the Council, including equal opportunities.

3.9 There has been progress in advertising of vacancies to reach a wider audience through job centres, libraries and on-line applications. The Council has been an early adopter of the local authority national on-line recruitment scheme (www.myjobscotland.com) and this is now in operation. An equalities impact assessment of the portal has been completed, and the Disability Working Group has provided feedback on the measures that need to be taken to ensure that disabled people can access and use this new system.

3.10 There has been significant progress in the monitoring employment practice in terms of equality, with year on year improvement in the completeness of data, reflecting improved monitoring and a wider range of information sources. An employee survey, including equality issues, was carried out in May 2007 and progress will be measured through analysis of the follow up survey in 2009. In addition, the data verification exercise carried out in February 2009 to support the job evaluation exercise provided data on gender, age, disability and ethnicity for over 80% of employees.

3.11 The Council addresses wider employment issues through its lead role in the West Dunbartonshire Employability Programme, which includes projects to support people with mental health problems, as well as assisting unemployed disabled people in general to participate in their initiatives. In the quarter from August 2008 to January 2009, from a total of 487 participants, 113 (23%) had some form of disability or long-term limiting illness. Nearly half (47%) of participants were women.

Impact Assessment

- 3.12** The assessment of the impact of policies and services on 'equality' groups is a central part of the Council's equality duties. An integrated approach to impact assessment involving disability, race and gender equality, along with health improvement, has been developed. Guidance has been produced 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 are encouraged to take account of the need for impact assessment in their scrutiny role.
- 3.13** Work has been carried out to develop links between impact assessment and improvement approaches such as the Customer Service Standard, Investors in People and the Public Service Improvement Framework.
- 3.14** Senior management has been briefed on the approach required to carry out impact assessment on key financial decisions, following on from a statement from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.
- 3.15** Over 20 assessments have been completed but a report to the Corporate Management Team in April 2009 advised that there was a need for a greater number to be carried out, and steps have been taken to ensure an increase this year.

Service Monitoring

- 3.16** Equality monitoring has been widely established across Council services, particularly in key areas of service such as social work and education. However, information is held on separate systems such as Carefirst and SAFRON, and there has been a limited amount of analysis of data.
- 3.17** In order to overcome the fragmented nature of equality monitoring, an equalities scorecard has been drawn up consisting of 31 equality measures in nine key 'domains' 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.
- 3.18** The initial data will provide a baseline from which to measure the Council's progress in promotion of equal opportunities, which will be contained in the annual equalities update at the end of each calendar year. A number of the measures in the scorecard have still to be fully developed and it is likely that additional measures will be added as the scorecard continues to take shape.

4 Disability Equality

4.1 This section of the report provides an account of the progress of approaches which specifically address disability equality.

Involvement and Consultation

4.2 The Council's Disability Working Group has provided 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. It has been involved in a number of the impact assessments of Council policy. The group is chaired by a member of the community and has expanded over the period of the scheme to provide wider representation. New membership has extended the range of disability issues that are represented, though the group recognises that it still has to develop representation from people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, as there is currently no group representing people with hearing loss in West Dunbartonshire.

4.3 In the Social Work and Health, Joint Community Care Planning Groups provide a forum for consumer groups and the statutory agencies to agree joint community care plans and the ways they will be implemented. They help to build effective working relationships in which consumers' views and expertise is used to highlight problem areas and gaps in services, to influence service delivery and to contribute to monitoring and evaluation of projects.

4.4 The West Dunbartonshire Partnership's Citizens' Panel has become an increasingly important source of information on the community's opinions and priorities. The panel consists of around 1433 members, of whom around 28% have identified themselves as disabled, therefore providing the opportunity to see how Council policies impact on disabled people in comparison with the community as a whole. For example, in 2008 a survey on election arrangements showed that disabled people found polling stations to be suitable and polling staff very supportive, while postal voting caused them greater difficulty.

4.5 In February 2008, two focus groups of disabled people from the Citizens' Panel provided some detailed response to a group of Council services, and the findings were reported back to the relevant departments. The observations gathered have been used, for example, to support the development of staff training described above.

4.6 At a more direct level, disabled people have been involved in:

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

Disability Profile

4.7 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 assist 'disability' groups in their representative role.

Access to Council Buildings and the Wider Environment

4.8 The Council's access improvement programme focuses on the most frequently used Council buildings and other buildings which support local communities; specifically halls, centres and libraries. From within these categories, Council departments and the disabled community are invited to identify access improvements which may:

- Address specific access problems
- Impact on the greatest number of people
- Coincide with other improvements
- Support specific Council objectives
- Contribute to improvement to the statutory performance indicator (SPI) which measures the percentage of Council buildings which disabled people can access without unreasonable difficulty.

4.9 Over the period of the scheme, work was carried out to improve access to 29 buildings and the SPI was increased from 34% to 50%.

4.10 A series of 'walking audits', in which disabled people accompanied roads engineers to inspect pedestrian routes led to improvements in pavements and pathways in Alexandria, Dumbarton and Clydebank. Recent consultation with the disabled community suggests that their continuing concern with the hazards and inconveniences in pedestrian routes outweighs their concerns about the accessibility of Council buildings.

Community Safety and the Elimination of Harassment

4.11 National research, and a local study in West Dunbartonshire, shows that disabled people are more likely than the population as a whole to be victims of crime, and to be anxious about the repercussions of reporting incidents. Meetings with representatives of the disabled community identified, in particular, the high level of concern at the vulnerability that disabled people feel when they report crime. A system of 'third party reporting' has been established in which victims of 'hate' crime, including crime against disabled people, can have information passed to the police through the Victim Support service.

4.12 In 2007, the Council's Homecare Service instigated a Password Scheme in which visually impaired people could guard against bogus callers by having a prearranged password to be used by Council staff. Around 100 home care service users use the scheme and it has had positive feedback from them. Since March 2009, the scheme has been extended to cover the Council's housing repair service though there has only been one instance of it being used in that time

4.13 In education, a monitoring system has been introduced to monitor incidents of harassment on the grounds of disability.

Promotion of Positive Attitudes

4.14 A number of actions have contributed to the goal of promoting positive attitudes toward the disabled community. These include:

- Publication of the disability profile.
- Equality newsletters in the West Dunbartonshire
- Equalities training
- Pupil Councils in secondary schools promoting disability equality issues within the younger generation.
- Advertising local accessibility through the DisabledGo website
- Hosting the Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance as a means to publicising transport issues.

5 Gender Equality

- 5.1 This section of the report provides an account of the progress of some approaches which specifically address gender equality issues.

Violence Against Women

- 5.2 The West Dunbartonshire Violence Against Women Partnership launched its new Strategy for tackling violence against women in November 2006, and it was adopted as one of the key components of the Gender Equality Scheme. The strategy builds on six years of successful joint working in response to the Scottish Executive's National Strategy for addressing all forms of male violence against women. It provides the basis for sharing resources, experience and expertise, and avoiding duplication of effort in the development of its four main pillars of action; **prevention** of abuse, **protection** from abuse, and the **provision** of support for women and children who have experienced abuse, and the **participation** of victims of abuse in the development of policy and services.
- 5.3 The partnership draws together the voluntary and public sectors and includes Clydebank Women's Aid, Dumbarton District Women's Aid, Rape Crisis, the Health Board, the Procurator Fiscal, the Children's Reporter, Strathclyde Police and the Council. It can also help other local agencies and groups seeking support in relation to abuse and violence against women, and has developed a training programme to support its work.
- 5.4 The Challenging and Responding to Abuse (CARA) Support Service was established in 2003 and provides direct services for women victims of domestic abuse. Over 100 women have received medium to long-term support from a worker who also helps women access other agencies and support services in the area. CARA organises a network of practitioners in the area and, along with the Community Learning and Development service, supports **SILK**, a women's group which provides its members with mutual support and the opportunity to campaign on the issue of violence against women.
- 5.5 The theme of prevention of abuse is picked up in the **Reduce Abuse Project** which co-ordinates and delivers training for young people in secondary schools and other youth settings in West Dunbartonshire. The project has identified children and young people's needs in relation to this issue and the Coordinator has developed a resource pack and training programme for teaching staff. The work of the Reduce Abuse Project is currently being extended to all secondary schools in West Dunbartonshire and plans are being drawn up to adapt the material for use in local primary schools.

Employment

5.6 Workforce monitoring and planning has been a key priority, which is reflected in the financial commitment to procuring a new HR system although this will not be fully operational until April 2010. This is an important tool for the long-term improvement of HR management in the council, including its capacity to analyse potential gender imbalance. Earlier in the scheme, significant progress was made in workforce monitoring by using different databases to produce higher quality monitoring reports for a range of forums including the Equality and Diversity Working Group.

5.7 One of the key drivers for this development has been the implementation of Single Status in the Council on the back of a national collective agreement, in line with equal pay legislation, to promote gender equality, the elimination of discriminatory practices in employment and the development of a flexible approach to service provision. Compliance with equal pay legislation, in respect of pay and other conditions of employment is a major component of this.

5.8 The agreement sought to end an unfair pay system that favoured male workers by ensuring employers implemented a common pay scale for all jobs, and harmonised terms and conditions based on equal pay and equal status for part-time staff. The council implemented the single status agreement during 2008/09 based on a 37-hour working week, including rationalisation of pay and grading, terms and conditions and allowances. This had been a major barrier to progress in developing workforce planning, requiring significant HR time input.

5.9 Improved consultations with the workforce through a range of processes like the employee survey and the establishment of consultative working groups has seen the development of a Flexible Working Policy to support staff with care responsibilities, who are disproportionately female. A salary sacrifice Childcare Voucher Scheme is currently in the final stages of procurement.

5.10 The council has also made some inroads in addressing occupational segregation through the recruitment of female modern apprentices in traditionally male occupations in the construction sector. The development of the new HR system will greatly enhance the council's capacity to identify other opportunities for this kind of targeted initiative. These measures will complement the Council's high proportion female managers in the top 2% and 5% of salary bands.

6 Education

- 6.1** In the education service, a Multi-agency Consultation Panel (MAC) has been formed to ensure that children and young people with additional support needs and, in particular, those with behavioural problems, get the best combination of mainstream education and additional specialized activity they require to meet their needs. An evaluation of MAC has shown that since its introduction, there had been a reduction of 41% in the number of children receiving education outside the Council, including children with learning disabilities and mental health conditions. There will be an evaluation of the outcome of this change for the children involved.
- 6.2** In January 2009, a survey of over 400 parents of children with additional support needs was carried out to:
- Determine the level of satisfaction with changes made in the implementation of the Additional Support for Learning Act and,
 - Determine how parents wish to be consulted and involved in policy decisions.

A report from the survey made the recommendation for further work to develop greater involvement of parents of children with additional support needs in decision making processes.

- 6.3** An Equality and Human Rights Group has been established to steer the equality agenda in relation to education. The group has identified UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award as a means to promote understanding and action in relation to equality. Pilot schools have been identified for the initiative, and the award programme will become part of the Council's Equality Scheme for 2009 to 2012.
- 6.4** A working group has been established to develop anti-bullying policies and strategies to tackle all bullying, including discrimination.

7 Conclusion

7.1 The Council's Disability Equality Scheme and Gender Equality Scheme have achieved significant progress in these two key areas of equality, and have contributed to the Council's equality duties. Much of this progress has been the form of measures which address equal opportunities as a whole, including employment policy, training, impact assessment and service monitoring.

7.2 Other measures have been specific to either disability or gender equality. In its promotion of disability equality, the Council has continued to make progress in the accessibility of its buildings, has addressed the issue of harassment, and has continued to address the need for effective communication. The disabled community has been involved in all of these measures.

7.3 In its promotion of gender equality, the council has demonstrated significant progress in addressing the two Scottish Government gender equality priorities of violence against women and segregation in employment.

7.4 Equality legislation sets out a distinct equality duty for Education services and the Council has been able to show progress in key areas such as the integration of disabled children into mainstream education, engagement with parents of disabled pupils and in measures to address bullying.

7.5 Progress has been made but there is further work to be done. For example, Impact assessment needs further promotion as the means to ensure that key policies and services address equality issues. Approaches to employee training have been developed but need provided to more staff. The Council has developed effective approaches to consultation and involvement but needs to extend these more widely to minority communities. These objectives and others will be included in the Council's equality Scheme 2009-12, due to be published in December 2009, which will set out its approach to disability, gender and race equality and include other equality strands such as age and sexual orientation.

8 Contact Information

Further information on the Council's Disability and Gender Equality Schemes can be provided by:

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