



# Draft Gender Equality Scheme

## **Foreword by the Chief Executive**

Ashford Borough Council is committed to ensuring gender equality in every aspect of its service provision and also in its responsibility as an employer. The Council will always promote equality of opportunity for everyone, regardless of race, gender, disability, age, faith or sexual orientation, both in the delivery of its services and in the employment of staff. It will also ensure that service assessments and reviews consider how diversity, human rights and user focus are considered, as part of the delivery of all its services.

A number of areas within the Council Corporate Plan for 2007 to 2010 underline our commitment to equality and quality of services:

- Provide quality services through year on year continuous improvement.
- Improve opportunities for residents to influence the provision of council services by introducing a consultation charter.

This Gender Equality Scheme sets out how we intend to reinforce our commitment. Each set of outcomes and objectives within the Action Plan will be delivered through a series of underpinning actions.

# 1. The Purpose of the Gender Equality Scheme

- 1.1. The Equality Act 2006 created the Gender Equality Duty for the public sector. The Gender Equality Duty has two parts to it, the “general” duty and the “specific” duty. The general duty places a legal duty on the Council:
  - to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
  - to promote equality of opportunity between men and women
- 1.2. To “help meet its general duty”, the Council has a specific duty to:
  - Produce a Gender Equality Scheme identifying its gender equality goals and actions to meet them, in consultation with employers and other stakeholders
  - Monitor and review progress
  - Review the Scheme every three years
  - Develop, publish and regularly review an equal pay policy, including measures to address promotion, development and occupational segregation
  - Conduct and publish gender impact assessments of all major policy developments, and publish its criteria for conducting such impact assessments
- 1.3. This scheme has been produced using priorities set by the Council’s strategic plans.
- 1.4. The purpose of this scheme is therefore to:
  - Show how the council will mainstream gender equality in all areas of its work
  - Meet and go beyond our legal duties gender equality a reality
  - Set out our priorities on how we intend to tackle gender inequality, eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity between women and men

## The Context

Some facts about women and men living in our area drawn from census/ data (*figures to be inserted as part of the consultation*):

- Of the population of **number**, there is an equal gender split between females and males - **A%** and **B%** respectively.
- There are more females over the age of 75 (**C%**) than males (**D%**).
- More women have limiting long-term illness (**E%**) as compared to men (**F%**).

- **G%** of women and **H%** of men do not have access to a car.
- The majority of part time workers are women who make up **I%** of such employees.
- Of all economically active 16 – 74 year olds high proportions of White British females (**J%**) work part-time, compared to all other ethnic groups (**K%**).
- Women have much lower levels of self-employment (**N%**) than men (**P%**).
- More men (**Q%**) than women (**R%**) occupy professional jobs.
- **S%** of females have no qualifications as compared to males (**T%**).
- There are three times more female than male lone parent households with dependent children, (**V** as compared to **W**).

## **2. Our Priorities**

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

- Good quality services giving best value for money
- Leadership and strong partnership working
- Customer/Citizen Focus
- Our Environment
- Ashford's Future
- Housing
- Prosperity

2.2. In addition, the actions within this Scheme will also reflect the result of consultation with employees.

## **3. Access to Services**

### **3.1. Achieving gender equality through service delivery**

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

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

## 4. Employment – Improving Diversity and Increasing Representation

### 4.1. Breaking down gender stereotypes and promoting positive role models

4.1.1. Monitoring of the Council's own workforce between (date 1) – (date 2) shows that A% of its workforce are female. (The departments where women have less representation are those, which have the greatest number of technical/ engineering based occupations.)

4.1.2. The Council's workforce reflects trends in wider society where females and males are more likely to work in areas that are considered to be stereotypical, for example 97% of apprentices entering into early years care and education are female and 98% entering construction, the motor industry and plumbing are male.

4.1.3. The Council feels it has some responsibility towards breaking down the barriers which stop boys and girls/men and women entering into non-traditional occupations. The Council will therefore:

- work closely with schools and colleges to promote the idea that girls and boys can do jobs traditionally dominated by the opposite sex
- promote positive gender role models such as female engineers and technicians and male care workers

### 4.2. Opening up more part-time working opportunities (figures to be confirmed as part of the consultation)

4.2.1. Typically almost half (46%) of the Council's female workforce (excluding the top 5% of earners), work part-time, compared to 7% of male employees. For employees at more senior levels (the top 5% earners) the figures are smaller, 12% for women and **number** men working part-time. The overall proportion of top 5% of earners who are women is 42.6%. This information does suggest that at all levels women are more likely to take up the opportunity to work part-time. At senior levels women are still more likely to work part time than men, but the proportions for both genders are substantially less. There is also a perception that part-time employees found it more difficult to access training and development activities.

4.2.2. The Council is committed to increasing part-time working opportunities for employees at all levels and to make this happen it will:

- Actively welcome and support job share, part time and flexible working opportunities throughout the organisation
- Publicise "the right to ask"
- Open up more job share and part-time opportunities at senior levels

### **4.3. Support and advice for carers**

4.3.1. The Council has a number of policies in place to support carers, which include:

- A flexible working hours scheme
- Special leave for carers of sick relatives
- Child care benefit scheme

4.3.2 However the council will work in consultation with its staff and their Trade Unions, to review its arrangements for providing support and information to carers

### **4.4. Tackling harassment and discrimination**

4.4.1. The Council is committed to tackling all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is not tolerated by the Council and specific procedures deal with such allegations. The harassment and bullying procedure will be reviewed to ensure that it reflects best practice and that all employees are aware of the support and advice available if they experience harassment.

4.4.2. The Council also has a 'whistle blowing' procedure, which extends the protection for employees who want to report bad practice without fear of being victimised as a result.

### **4.5. Training employees on equality and diversity**

4.5.1. Training for the challenge of delivering Equality is included within the Council's training plan. The purpose is to provide managers and employees with the skills and knowledge they need to ensure that equality becomes part of our day-to-day activities. The plan will also help to create a culture where diversity is truly valued and is seen as an asset to help deliver all the Council's objectives.

4.5.2. The approach includes:

- Designing into the content of training appropriate equality/diversity elements from service delivery and employment perspectives.
- Analysis of the training needs for individual employees and Members.

The Council evaluates the training programme. If there is evidence to show that the training needs have changed programmes are re-designed.

### **4.6. Equal pay review / audit**

4.6.1 The Council is committed to carrying out an equal pay review. We have a legal obligation to comply with the Equal Pay Act and we are also committed under the terms of the National Agreement.

4.6.2 The review will identify and inform us of the possible risks and our responsibilities relating to Equal Pay. It also will help us to ensure we have pay structures, which are fair and therefore greatly reduce the likelihood of pay gaps between jobs of

equal value.

4.6.3 Unison and Staff Side will be involved throughout the review, in order that all aspects of equal pay are properly examined, and that the review is carried out with the agreement and support. Progress will be reported to the Executive.

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

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

## **5. Comments and Complaints**

5.1. Members of the public who feel that they have experienced illegal discrimination in the way the Council has treated them may make a complaint through its Corporate Complaints procedure. We will take all complaints seriously and will not tolerate any form of discriminatory behaviour. Monitoring complaints is another way of gathering information to see whether we are meeting our equality duties.

5.2. The Members' Code of Conduct and Standards Committee deal with complaints about the conduct of elected members.

5.3. Members of draft who fear that they may have experienced illegal discrimination must alert the Council by using the grievance procedure.

## **7. Equality Impact Assessments**

7.1. An Equality Impact Assessment is a way of deciding whether a current or proposed policy, procedure, practice or service does (or may) have an "adverse impact" on some sections of society. The "adverse impact" may often be the result of not taking into account the needs of women or men, black and ethnic minority groups, disabled people, people's religion or belief, sexual orientation or age.

7.2. Assessments will be carried out on new policies and services, as they are developed and over time on all other existing policies and services. The Council's approach to Gender equality issues is that they will be considered alongside other equality issues when equality impact assessments are carried out.

7.3. Guidance and training will be provided to employees who are responsible for undertaking Equality Impact Assessments.

7.4. The results of equality impact assessments will be reported to the Executive.

## **8. Monitoring of the Scheme**

- 8.1. This Scheme will be reviewed every three years. The Action Plan attached as Appendix A will be reviewed at similar intervals. Progress on the Scheme and Action Plan will be reported to the Executive periodically.
- 8.2. Relevant performance indices are shown in Appendix B.

### Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan (say) 2007- 2010

Action	Outcome	Performance Measure	Responsibility	Target Date
1. Review part-time working and job share practice.	Identify the barriers to part time working and job share opportunities with a view to removing such barriers wherever possible.	% Of part time employees in the council by gender and, % of part time employees at senior levels by gender.		
2. To increase the numbers of part-time and job share opportunities.	More part-time and job share opportunities are available across all jobs.	% Of jobs advertised as part-time and as job share.		
3. Carry out periodically an equal pay audit.	Pay differences between women and men in respect of work of the same or equal value have been identified and where necessary remedial measures are put in place to correct differences.	Production of report with recommendations arising from 1 audit.		
4. Produce guidance to ensure improved recording of information on pay to enable effective comparison between jobs.	Improved levels of information will allow for better comparison between jobs.	Production of guidance		

## Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan 2007- 2010

Action	Outcome	Performance Measure	Responsibility	Target Date
5. Development of equal pay action plan.	Implementation of the outcome of annual equal pay review.	Production of action plans.		
6. Promote “non-traditional” jobs through, for example, the Council’s website, targeted publications, job fairs and schools and colleges.	An increase in the numbers of females and males applying for and being appointed to “non-traditional” jobs.	The % of males and females applying for a range of different occupations.		
7. Review arrangements for providing support and information to carers.	Employees who have caring responsibilities feel there is an improvement in the support and advice they receive from the Council.	Satisfaction with the Council as a good employer as measured by the annual staff survey.		
8. Review and implement the harassment and bullying procedure, ensuring that the elements relevant to sexual harassment are fully considered.	Employees and managers are aware of their responsibilities on sexual harassment, how to report and deal with it appropriately to minimise distress for those involved.	Policy in place and training being provided.		

## Gender Equality Scheme 2007- 2010

Action	Outcome	Performance Measure	Responsibility	Target Date
9. Extend the racist incidents common monitoring projects to capture other hate related incidents, including incidents relating to a persons' gender.	Gender related incidents are recorded and mapped.	Establishment of common monitoring system to capture data on hate crime.		
10. The transport accessibility forum to be representative in terms of its gender make up and to reflect the issues affecting women	A representative group is established which considers issues affecting women accessing public transport	Representation of accessibility forum Satisfaction of transport services by gender		
11. Gender equality is included within all contracts and commissioning agreements where equality is a core requirement of delivering the service	All contracts and commissioning agreements where equality is a core requirement in delivering the service includes specific details of how the service will be delivered to women and men in a way which ensures gender equality and which meets the needs of service users.	Full compliance with the equality elements of the procurement procedures		
12. Ensure that gender equality is integrated into the delivery of the equality and diversity training strategy	Staff have a good understanding of how gender equality impacts upon all relevant aspects of service delivery and employment, and what their responsibilities are.	All relevant training and development activity include gender equality component		

## Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan 2007- 2010

Action	Outcome	Performance Measure	Responsibility	Target Date
13. Service areas to carry out equality impact assessments.	Identify any adverse impact for women and men in respect of provision of services and employment.	Number of EIAs agreed to be completed within a 12-month period.		
14. All service plans to include gender specific objectives and targets.	Meaningful gender equality objectives and targets in respect of service delivery and employment have been set and work started to achieve them.	Objectives and targets to be found in all service plans.		
15. All service areas to review Gender Equality targets and use information from monitoring to assess whether targets have been achieved.	Service areas are able to use monitoring information to assess whether gender equality targets are being met and begin the process of setting new targets.	Equality Standard		
16. To have met all gender equality targets and set new targets.	The Council can demonstrate that it has made marked improvements in its gender equality work and can share best practice with other organisations.	Equality Standard		

Appendix B

Performance Indicator Targets									
PI Code	PI Description	05/06 Target	05/06 Actual	06/07 Target		07/08 Target		08/09 Target	
BV2a	The level of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the authority conforms.	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3		Level 4		Level 5	
BV11a	The percentage of the top 5% of earners employed by the authority (excluding staff in schools) that are women.							45%	