



Lewes District Council

Gender
Equality
Scheme
2007-2010

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Gender Equality Scheme 2007 – 2010

Equality Statement

We are responsible for providing efficient and effective services that are valued by all sections of the community. We must recognise and understand the needs of different groups and ensure that everyone has equal access to our services, information and employment opportunities. We aim to provide services fairly to all and seek to identify those whose needs are less well met by us and how we can address those needs.

Discrimination can occur in society against, for example, women, people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, disabled people and on the basis of age, religious belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, family status and social class. We are committed to eliminating discrimination and ensuring that people are not excluded from community life or disadvantaged for any reason.

We are committed to meeting our statutory equality responsibilities, especially in relation to gender, race and disability. We will aim to place equality issues at the centre of our service planning and decision-making processes. We will work to ensure that all of our working practices promote access, equality and good relations between different groups and eliminate unlawful discrimination.

We have implemented a Gender Equality Scheme in accordance with the Equality Act 2006. This Scheme fulfils the Council's specific duty under the Act whilst complementing the other objectives in our Comprehensive Equality Policy. We are also working to improve our equality practices within the Equality Standard for Local Government which is a framework for levels of achievement in delivering equality in employment and service delivery.

To demonstrate our commitment, both the lead Cabinet member for Staff and Corporate Services and the Chief Executive have responsibility for leading the Council's equality agenda.

1. Background

1.1 The Gender Equality Duty

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 sex discrimination and harassment
- Promote equality of opportunity between women and men.

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

- Publish a Gender Equality Scheme showing how we will meet our duties and setting out our gender equality objectives.
- Publish and regularly review an equal pay policy, including measures to address the causes of the gender pay gap including promotion, development and occupational segregation.
- Gather and use information on how our policies and practices affect gender equality.
- Consult employees and other stakeholders on our gender equality objectives.
- Assess the impact of our current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality.
- Implement the actions set out in our Scheme within three years.
- Report on the Scheme every year and review it at least every three years.

The purpose of this Scheme is to set out what we are currently doing to promote gender equality and tackle sex discrimination, and how we intend to meet the needs of women and men as an employer and as a provider of services.

People who identify as transsexual will also be protected under the Gender Equality Duty from December 2007, although the Council intends to ensure that this right is taken into account from the start of this Scheme. The law defines transsexual people as those undergoing, intending to undergo, or having already undergone, gender reassignment.

1.2 Our Vision and Priorities

Since 2005, Lewes District Council has had a Comprehensive Equality Policy which seeks to ensure that all of our services and employment practices provide equality of access and opportunity for everyone, whatever their gender, race, disability, age, religious belief or sexual orientation.

This is our first Scheme to focus on gender equality and will be a distinct document that complements the objectives of our Comprehensive Equality Policy.

Equality is a central part of the Council’s aims and objectives. Our ambition is to be recognised as a centre of excellence in environmental management and to make sustainable improvements in the quality of life of local communities.

We will do this by:

- Protecting and enhancing the quality of the environment
- Supporting and promoting a diverse and prosperous local economy
- Supporting the housing, health and social needs of everyone in our communities.

We want people to recognise us as a good, well performing Council that:

- Strives for continuous improvement in services and processes
- Delivers good value, efficient and effective services
- Looks after the local environment
- Consults with and listens to its customers
- Works effectively with partners in the local community
- Respects diversity and promotes access and equality
- Is open, honest and accountable
- Is a good employer that supports and develops its workforce.

1.3 National and Local Context

National research from the Equal Opportunities Commission (2004) highlights:

- Although women now make up nearly half of the workforce and men’s role in caring for children is growing, women still take on the majority of care for children.
- Women and men have different working patterns. 44% of working women work part-time, compared to only 10% of men. Women often take breaks from paid work to care for others. For many, this results in limited career progress, lower pay and reduced pensions. Women pensioners’ incomes are just 57% of men’s.
- Even when both partners work, women still do the majority of the domestic work.
- Even if caring and domestic roles were shared more evenly, women and men would still have distinctive needs, for example in their health and in their personal safety.

The 2001 Census and the NOMIS official labour market statistics show the following facts about women and men living in our area:

- Lewes District’s total population is 93,914. The gender split is 52.1% females and 47.9% males.
- There are more females over the age of 75 (61.7%) than males (38.3%).
- Percentage of females and males aged 16-74 in employment:

	Female	Male
Part-time	23.3%	8.5%
Full-time	25.7%	39.7%

- Among full-time workers, average earnings for men were 35% higher in 2006 than for women.
- Of the total number of males employed, 50.1% work 38-48 hours a week and 25.4% work 49 or more hours.

- Of the total number of females employed, 25.3% work 38-48 hours a week and 7.1% work 49 or more hours.
- 64.5% of lone fathers are employed full-time and 6.4% part-time, while 21.8% of lone mothers are employed full-time and 35.1% part-time.
- 10.5% of Lewes population provide unpaid care.

An Equal Opportunities Commission report in 2006 found that, following the May 2004 elections, 71% of councillors in England were male, while 29% were female. This represented a slight increase from 28% in 1997. It also indicated that male councillors are more likely than female councillors to hold positions such as leader or deputy leader of the council, or to be chairs or vice-chairs of council committees.

Lewes District Council has a slightly lower than national average split between male and female councillors. Of the 41 Lewes District councillors, 73% are male and 27% are female. Between 2003-07, 44% of our councillors were female. The Leader of the Council is female and the Deputy Leader is male. This gender balance is reflected in the chairmanship of the committees.

2. The Council's Actions in support of Gender Equality

2.1 Responsibility for Equality

The responsibility to promote equality and to take action to eliminate discrimination whenever and wherever it occurs is the task of every councillor and employee of Lewes District Council, not just those with a defined role set out below.

The lead Cabinet member for Staff and Corporate Services is the lead councillor for Equalities. All councillors are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the Council meets its equalities duties.

The Chief Executive is the corporate lead officer for Equalities. The Corporate Management Team and Service Heads are responsible for ensuring that the Scheme's principles and actions are implemented within their departments.

The internal Equalities Working Group is formed of representatives from each department and oversees the development and progress of the Council's equalities work. The Equalities Co-ordinator's role is to co-ordinate the Council's work in meeting its equalities duties and progress through each level of the Equality Standard for Local Government, and to represent the Council on external partnerships in relation to equality.

2.2 The Council as an Employer

Equal Pay

The Council recognises the importance of providing a fair and equitable pay and reward system that delivers equal pay to women and men. The Equal Opportunities Commission state that the main factors that contribute to the gender pay gap are:

- Discrimination, including pay discrimination (often inadvertent but still illegal).
- Women's disproportionate share of caring responsibilities which can result in restricted career continuity and progression and women being over-represented in part-time posts.
- The concentration of women in particular occupations characterised by lower levels of pay.

In 2007, 47% of the Council's 464 employees were female, of whom 61% work full-time and 39% part-time. Of male employees, 88% work full-time and 12% part-time.

14% of the top 5% of earners in the Council were women. The Council recognises that there is a gender imbalance at top tier level. Changes depend on vacancies arising for these posts although the Council aims to increase this figure year on year.

Since 2006, the Council has been addressing any inequalities in pay and status by periodically carrying out an Equal Pay Audit to ensure that pay differences between women and men in respect of work of the same or equal value have been identified and, where necessary, remedial measures put in place to correct differences.

Flexible Working

The Council offers a range of flexible working options to help take account of the potential needs of staff with caring responsibilities and those who have health or other lifestyle issues which affect their capacity to deliver fixed working hours or locations. These include:

- Flexi-time
- Part-time working
- Term-time working
- Childcare voucher scheme
- Leave banking
- Time off for dependents
- Home-based working trials.

All can be actively considered in the light of work requirements. The Council is committed to improving awareness of, access to, and take up of its flexible working options for female and male employees.

Training and Development

To strengthen our capacity to deliver our equality objectives and to help create a culture where diversity is truly valued, all new and existing staff and councillors receive Equality and Diversity training.

All staff have regular appraisals where their training needs are agreed with them. All have access to training at a level suitable to their role, experience and previous training. Staff do not have to apply for training.

Harassment and Discrimination

The Council is committed to providing a harmonious working environment where every employee is treated with dignity and respect. All forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, will not be tolerated by the Council and our Dignity at Work policy ensures that all employees are aware of the options and support available to them if they experience harassment or bullying.

Employment Monitoring

The Council has and will continue to collect and monitor the following data according to gender, disability and ethnicity:

- Our workforce profile
- Recruitment and selection
- Discipline
- Grievance, harassment and bullying
- Training
- Staff leavers.

The purpose of collating this data is to help us to tailor further actions and initiatives to improve recruitment, development and retention of a more gender balanced workforce.

2.3 Council Service Provision

Access to Services

We will ensure that information about Council services is available to all sections of the community and services are accessible to both women and men. To achieve this we will:

- Monitor our customers' satisfaction and use of services by gender where relevant.
- Continue to 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.

Service Delivery

The Council is already responding in key policy-making and service areas to the different needs and potential barriers experienced by women and men. Some examples of how the Council is promoting gender equality through service delivery are by:

- Taking part in a County-wide Hate Crime Review to consider extending the current Racist Incident Reporting Scheme to include all hate incidents, including incidents relating to gender, transgender and sexual orientation.
- Introducing a housing sanctuary scheme in the District for people experiencing domestic violence.
- Including additional information in our information pack for potential candidates for District Council elections to encourage a diverse range of people to become councillors and get involved in local decision making.
- Introducing new guidance to ensure equality requirements are met through our procurement and contract management arrangements.

3. Implementing the Scheme

The Council is committed to making sure that equality is at the heart of all that we do wherever relevant. This will be achieved principally by carrying out equality assessments of our policies and services, taking action on the results and embedding equality principles in our service provision and employment practices.

Gender equality issues are considered alongside other equality issues when the assessments are carried out. Where barriers to gender equality are identified, we will take appropriate action by considering methods to address inequalities and achieve a more positive impact. We will consider other solutions where it is not reasonable or practical for us to carry out any part of the Scheme. We will continue to work in partnership with other statutory and voluntary organisations on the gender duty.

Our programme of equality assessments has highlighted several areas which require a corporate response and learning opportunities have arisen for each service area based on these main objectives:

- Improving access and equal opportunity in use of services and employment.
- Improving our practices for engaging the community and encouraging participation.
- Improving monitoring arrangements and storing of collected data.
- Continuing to raise awareness and provide training.

3.1 Equality Assessments

The Council conducts equality assessments on its policies and practices as part of its compliance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Disability Discrimination Act 2005, Gender Equality Duty and its work on the Equality Standard for Local Government.

The Council developed its equality assessment framework in 2004 and a programme of relevant policies and services were prioritised for equality assessments. Gender was identified as a key category to be considered in this process and will continue to be so as new and existing policies and practices are assessed. Assessment findings and action plans will be published on the Council's website for information for the public and for audit purposes.

Results will be used to set the Council's equality objectives that become part of departmental service plans, leading to improvements to services and employment practices. Progress on the equality assessments is monitored by the Equalities Working Group and reported to Cabinet.

Appendix 1 provides a full list of policies and services assessed over the last three years. Guidance and on-going advice has been, and will continue to be, provided to staff who are responsible for undertaking the equality assessments to ensure each assessment is robust and meaningful to service users and staff.

3.2 Equality Standard for Local Government

In order to deliver our overall commitments on equality and diversity, the Council has adopted the Equality Standard for Local Government. The Equality Standard includes the six equality areas covered by law: race, disability, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation and age.

The Equality Standard is a framework through which local authorities can meet their legal obligations under anti-discrimination legislation. It has five levels of achievement:

Level 1: Commitment to a Comprehensive Equality Policy

Level 2: Assessment and consultation

Level 3: Setting equality objectives and targets

Level 4: Using information systems and monitoring against equality targets

Level 5: Achieving and reviewing outcomes

The Council has achieved Level 1 and is conducting a programme of equality assessments which will help us to achieve Level 2. The aim is not simply to work through the levels but also to demonstrate at each stage how this process has improved our services and opportunities for employment.

3.3 Complaints

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

However, we recognise that we need to strengthen our monitoring arrangements for complaints.

Members of staff can use the Council's Dignity at Work policy or formal employment processes such as the Grievance procedure for incidents involving another employee.

The Code of Conduct for Members and Standards Committee deal with complaints about the conduct of councillors.

3.4 Consultation and Using Information

The collation and analysis of gender related information plays an important part in ensuring we are able to set and achieve our gender equality objectives. We already have some of this information through our programme of equality assessments. We will continue to gather and use the information in order to understand which of our activities have the greatest impact on gender equality and plan for positive actions to remove any identified inequality and discrimination.

Gender specific objectives for each department will be informed by the following information:

- Equality assessment findings and consultation.
- Comments, suggestions and complaints.
- Monitoring relevant information including the gender of service users and which services they are not using.
- Workforce information including gender of staff across all departments, grades, occupations and pay levels.

The Council will also continue to make effective use of other methods of research and, where appropriate, include specific questions for people to comment directly on any issue related to their gender that might affect the way we provide our services and as an employer. These methods include:

- Residents' Satisfaction Survey
- Citizens' Panel
- Staff Satisfaction Survey
- Service specific surveys.

Residents, staff and councillors are invited to read and comment on the Scheme on the Council's website at <http://www.lewes.gov.uk/legal/11824.asp>. Further consultation is being carried out with equality stakeholder groups, local public authorities and with women and men in Lewes District to ensure the Scheme reflects their priorities and concerns.

Monitoring data

The Council recognises that monitoring gender, ethnicity and disability is an important tool to ensuring equity in service delivery and employment for these groups of people. In order to improve data collection systems to strengthen our capacity to identify and meet our equality objectives, we are introducing corporate guidance to ensure a consistent equalities monitoring standard across the Council. The guidance will support departments in complying with the monitoring requirements of the Equality Standard and equalities legislation.

4. Monitoring the Scheme

This Scheme will be reviewed and revised every three years and the next version will be published in 2010.

Progress on the Action Plan will be reviewed and reported on each year.

5. Gender Equality Action Plan

The Gender Equality Action Plan contained in **Appendix 2** sets out the Council's gender equality objectives in employment practices and provision of services and identifies areas for improvement. It includes corporate and departmental actions.

Equality Assessments Programme

Equality Assessments 2004/07

Year 1

Tourism and Cultural Services
Disciplinary, Grievance and Capability Procedures
Employment of People with Criminal Convictions
Training and Development
Pay and Benefits
Flexitime
Recruitment
Code of Conduct
Whistleblowing
Personal Appearance
Time off for Dependents

Year 2

Development and Building Control
Planning Policy
Flood and Coast Defence
Leisure Facilities
Housing Strategy
Housing Register and Allocations
Homelessness and Housing Advice
Private Sector Housing
Housing Services including rents, repairs, estates management and supported housing
Crime Reduction
Community Planning, Sports and External Funding
Parks and Open Spaces
Amenities and Street Cleaning
Housing and Council Tax Benefits and Fraud
Dignity at Work
Personal Relationships

Year 3

Reception, Post Room and document processing
Elections and Registration
Committee and Councillor Services
Consultation and Communication
Equalities
Environmental Health Services including public health complaints, food safety and Travellers
Debt Recovery
Concessionary bus passes
Performance Management information
Procurement
Information Technology (IT) including Help Desk, application support, Freedom of Information and Data Protection
Legal Advice and Estates
Waste and Recycling Collection

Equality Assessments 2007/08

Enforcement

Redeployment on Medical Grounds

Home working

Recruitment

Flexible retirement

Review completed assessments and publish results

Assess new policies and procedures

Appendix 2

Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan 2007 – 2010

Action	Objective	Performance Measure	Responsibility	Timescale
Employment				
Review compassionate leave entitlements and increase information provided in Staff Guide.	Consistent advice provided to cover gender-related issues that might give rise to compassionate leave.	Amended policy published on Infolink	Personnel Officer/Head of Business Services	November 2007
Ensure Equal Pay Audit continues to be carried out periodically.	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	Head of Business Services	Ongoing
Promote non-traditional jobs through the Council's website and schools and colleges.	Information on non-traditional jobs provided on Council's website and to local schools and colleges for whom we provide work experience placements.	Information published on website	Head of Business Services and Personnel Officers	December 2007

Action	Objective	Performance Measure	Responsibility	Timescale
Review the availability of benefits and training opportunities for gender bias.	Equal availability of benefits and training.	Statistics on performance available	Head of Business Services and Personnel Officers	April 2008
Other Services				
Extend Racist Incident Reporting Scheme to include other hate crime, including incidents relating to a person's gender, disability and sexual orientation.	Hate crime incidents are recorded, monitored and responded to.	Establishment of system to report, monitor and respond to hate crime incidents	Community Safety Officer	Review commenced March 2007 and ongoing
Build confidence among victims of domestic violence to report incidents, provide victims with support and work with perpetrators to reduce repeat offences.	Overall level of crime reduced, particularly violent crime, domestic violence and hate crime.	Number of reported domestic violence incidents increased and number of offences committed by repeat offenders reduced	Community Safety Officer	Ongoing
Investigate whether development proposals can better take account of women and disabled people's needs when public buildings and open spaces are designed.	Access to public buildings and facilities by women promoted through planning policy advice and information.	RTPI guidelines reviewed and implemented if appropriate	Relevant Building and Development Control officers	Ongoing

Action	Objective	Performance Measure	Responsibility	Timescale
Corporate				
Conduct equality assessments on all relevant and proposed policies and service areas.	Improve services and performance by mainstreaming gender equality.	Completed equality assessments	Equalities Co-ordinator/Heads of Service	Ongoing
Introduce/improve equalities monitoring to ensure we have sufficient information to assess how our activities affect women and men.	Satisfaction levels and impact of activities identified and information used to improve services.	Established system for equalities monitoring	Heads of Service/Equalities Co-ordinator	Commenced April 2007 and ongoing
Include gender specific objectives in all departmental service plans	Meaningful gender equality objectives for services and employment are set and work started to achieve them.	Objectives found in all departmental service plans	Heads of Service/Equalities Co-ordinator	Ongoing as plans reviewed
Review gender specific objectives to assess whether targets achieved and set new ones.	Monitoring information used to assess gender equality targets and set new ones. Improvement in gender equality work demonstrated.	Equality Standard Level 3	Heads of Service/Equalities Co-ordinator	Ongoing as objectives set

Action	Objective	Performance Measure	Responsibility	Timescale
Ensure corporate mechanism for consultation includes appropriate engagement and analysis in relation to gender.	Women and men from all groups feel equally involved and consulted, and services informed by differing needs as identified through effective engagement.	Timetable for inclusion of gender specific consultation identified	Communications Manager/Equalities Co-ordinator	April 2008
Review use of corporate images/photos to ensure female and male mages in non-stereotypical roles are used in marketing material.	Positive action taken to address potential gender discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.	Leaflets etc. with non-stereotypical images	Communications Manager	April 2008
Ensure that gender equality is included in all contract arrangements where equality is a core requirement of delivering the service.	Conditions included in all contracts that suppliers and contractors must comply with gender equality, equal pay and sex discrimination legislation.	Contract sign-up and compliance	Legal Assistant/Head of Audit and Performance	December 2007