

Report

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Report to:	Corporate Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	7 July 2009
Report by:	Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Gender Equality Scheme Annual Update 2009
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ advise of the progress the Council has made in implementing the Gender Equality Scheme in the last year.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that progress to date be noted

3. Background

3.1. The gender equality duty was introduced by the Equality Act 2006 which amended the Sex Discrimination Act and places a statutory duty on public authorities when carrying out their functions to have “due regard” to the need to:

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

This “general duty” came into force on 6 April 2007 and applies to all of the Council’s functions including policy making, service provision, decision making and employment. The duty applies to services and functions which are contracted out, and also where any private or voluntary organisation is carrying out a public function on behalf of the Council.

3.2. As part of the duty, public authorities are required to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment in employment and vocational training in respect of people who intend to undergo, or have undergone, gender reassignment

3.3. A series of “specific duties” were required to be met by public authorities by 29 June 2007. These were to:

- gather information on how their work affects women and men, boys and girls
- consult employees, service users and other stakeholders
- assess the different impact of policies and practices on both sexes and use this information to inform their work
- identify priorities and set gender equality objectives
- plan and take action to achieve these objectives

- publish a gender quality scheme, report annually and review progress every three years

3.4. A separate duty applies to education authorities in Scotland. In addition to publishing their own scheme and equal pay statement, they have to ensure that the schools they manage gather information on the effects of their policies and practices on gender equality, assess the impact of these policies, and report on these activities. The fact that staff within education “authorities” are employed by Councils and, therefore, covered by their Council’s employment policies was pointed out to the Equal Opportunities Commission who remained of the opinion that a separate equal pay statement was required. The Executive Director (Education Resources) has prepared a separate “gender equality statement of commitment” for publication and an annual report will be published in line with the Council’s.

4. Our Progress to Date

4.1. In the first year of the Gender Equality Scheme our work focussed on taking forward the actions identified in the Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan.

This included the promoting our positive action programme ‘Delivering a Fairer Future’ to employees across Resources and starting to address the imbalance that exists in our workforce.

Support was given to community based projects such as the Advancing Women’s Employability (AWE) project which assisted 36 local women aged 50+ to re-evaluate their career options and consider if further learning would allow promotion opportunities and careers aspirations to be achieved.

As well as this, over 100 work tasters and placements were given to allow employees to try non-traditional roles and over 60 employees took part in career discussion sessions to look at how they could progress in their careers through non-traditional routes.

Doorway, South Lanarkshire’s Partnership on Domestic Abuse and Violence against women, carried out awareness raising training for over 1000 practitioners and service users to highlight the issue of domestic abuse and the services that are available to victims.

With regard to equal pay there are currently in excess of 1,700 equal pay claims lodged with the Employment Tribunal. At all times, the Resource is working in the best interests of the Council with regard to the claims made.

With regard to our workforce, there is an SPI in relation to women coming in the top 5% of salaries, women now make up 50.91% of our employees in this range.

4.2. This only represented the start of work towards improving gender equality and in 2008/2009 we continued to build upon what had been done by doing the following:

- Over 300 impact assessments have been carried out across the work that the Council does to ensure that we properly take account of the needs of all members of our community.
- Early Years was identified as a service where ‘Delivering a Fairer Future’ could have an impact and as such seven men are now employed.

- The Council's Return to Learn IT programme which is run in partnership with Unison has encouraged 35 women and 12 men to learn IT skills. The programme is specifically for people with no knowledge of computers and is enabling staff who in their current roles, don't have access to or a need to use a PC to develop skills that they can use at home and in the workplace for career development.
- Through 'Delivering a Fairer Future' 10 women have successfully gained zero hours contracts for community driving. This has enabled them to increase their income and opened up future career opportunities.

4.3. With regards to equal pay, work is ongoing and there has been progress made in increasing the numbers of women in higher grades. The Council has a workforce split of 67% female and 33% male. This figure has not changed since the first equal pay review was carried out in 2005/06. However at this point women represented 84% of employees in the lowest grade band and only 35% of those in the top grade band. This has now changed and 80% of the lowest grade band and 40% of the top grade are now female.

4.4. An example of change in female pay is that there has been an increase in female representation for Grade 2 (+6% from 49%), Grade 3 has remained the same, Grade 4 (+3% from 37%). In 2006, it was reported that there were 62 females in the top pay band and there are now 74 females which represents an increase of 19%.

5. Priorities for the Year Ahead

5.1. We are not complacent about the work we need to do though with the recent announcement of the Equality Bill we have started work to develop a Single Equality Scheme. This will bring together the existing race, disability and gender schemes with the areas of age, sexual orientation, gender identity and religion or belief. The intention is to develop a scheme that builds on the good work and partnerships that have come from our original three schemes and provide a clear statement on how we will continue to work to meet the needs of all members of our community and workforce.

5.2. As such our actions for 2009/2010 are to develop and introduce our new Single Equality Scheme whilst also raising the profile of key positive actions programmes such as 'Delivering a Fairer Future' to ensure that those working and living in South Lanarkshire are given the opportunities they need to achieve all that they want.

6. Employee Implications

6.1. The Gender Equality Scheme affects all Council employees as it applies to Council service delivery as well as to the Council as an employer

A comprehensive package of training relating to equality and diversity awareness is available to all employees and elected members.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. Cost associated with the Gender Equality Scheme action plan and associated consultation will be met from existing resources.

8. Other Implications

8.1. A further annual progress report will be produced in June next year.

Our progress report and Education's statement of commitment are available on the Council's website as of 29 June 2009.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.
- 9.2. There was no requirement to undertake any consultation in terms of the information contained in this report.

Robert McIlwain
Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

21 May 2009

Link(s) to Council Objectives/Values

- Fair and open
- Accountable effective and efficient
- Committed to tackling disadvantage and deprivation
- Determined to act in a responsible and sustainable way

Previous References

Corporate Resources Committee of 2 July 2008

List of Background Papers

Gender Equality Scheme

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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South Lanarkshire Council Gender Equality Scheme

Annual progress report June 2009

Introduction:

South Lanarkshire Council launched its Gender Equality Scheme in June 2007 and since then has worked with the community and its workforce to promote fairness of choice and opportunity between men and women. The scheme aims to ensure that gender equality, like all equality issues, is not simply an “add on”, but is “built in” to the services that we provide. This work is a key part of the Council plan ‘Connect’ and our vision to “improve the quality of life of everyone in South Lanarkshire.”

By having ‘listening’ events, forums and working groups, the Council makes sure that it involves individuals and groups. In asking for feedback on the work that we do, people have helped the Council to make a difference to the services it provides and has increased the choices available to all. This work has been focused by our action plan which has enabled our performance to be monitored and reviewed.

The Council plan ‘Connect’ which was published in 2007 sets out our commitments for the four years, 2007-2011. The plan highlights the priorities and objectives that we have set for our services and it also explains the values which underpin all that we do and which believe will help us achieve our vision. The values are:

- Fair and open
- People Focused
- Working with and respecting others
- Excellent employer
- Accountable, effective and efficient
- Tackling disadvantage and deprivation
- Sustainable development

With these values as our focus we have taken further steps forward in gender equality in the last year but we do recognise that there is still much to be done. Our positive action programme for employees ‘Delivering a Fairer Future’, continues to produce good results, and also highlight areas where more can be done.

We are clear that there is no quick and easy way to eliminate gender inequality however it is work that large public sector organisations like ourselves need to be involved in so that we can rightly tackle the difficult issues which mean those in our community are not being given fair opportunities. It is for us to lead by example and show that embedding equality into the work we do, will ensure that we are providing the best, most effective and efficient services possible which meet the needs of those living and working in our community.

Archibald Strang
Chief Executive
South Lanarkshire Council

Action Plan Progress:

In our last Gender Equality Scheme update action plan we set out to build upon the success of our first year. In that year we had produced our equal pay policy, developed a good practice guide that showed how we and our partners could build gender equality into the our work and we trained over 1,000 practitioners through 'Doorway', South Lanarkshire's Partnership on Domestic Abuse and Violence against women. With the Council plan 'Connect' values in mind we set out to ensure that that all we do is fair and open; people focused; involves and respects others; accountable effective and efficient; tackles disadvantage and deprivation and is responsible and sustainable. Some of the work we have done this year has involved the following:

Achievements June 2008 – June 2009:

Fair and Open

- Over 300 impact assessments have been carried out across the work that the Council does to ensure that we properly take account of the needs of all members of our community.
- Over 220 of these assessments can be viewed on the Council website.
- An ongoing schedule of assessments has been created to ensure that when policies and services are being reviewed or developed that equality matters are considered at the start of the process and not as an afterthought.
- 325 employees have undertaken impact assessment training.

People focused

- Our 2008 household survey showed that the average satisfaction rating across all Council services was 72.4% for both men and women.
- The survey highlighted areas such as 'Council housing services' and 'Services for young people' where men had higher satisfaction ratings whilst women were more satisfied with 'Maintenance of roads and pavements' and 'Processing of planning applications and building warrants'.
- These survey results are allowing us to develop the work we do so that both men and women can access and receive the same level of service.

Working with and respecting others

- An equalities network has been established for the South Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership to share information and good practice to ensure that equalities is given proper consideration in the work that we do together.
- Consultation and involvement with our employee forums and community representatives on our proposed Single Equality Scheme and our Dignity at Work policy has been undertaken.
- There has been a 100% increase in the number of men participating in the Community Safety Partnership's 'Be Smart Be Safe' project which aims to improve personal safety and security of those in the 60+ age group.

Excellent employer

- Early Years was identified as a service where 'Delivering a Fairer Future could have an impact and as such seven men are now employed.

- The Childcare Partnership continues to support the “Men into Childcare” initiative and partnership nurseries are employing more male nursery workers.
- Through ‘Delivering a Fairer Future’ 10 female workers from likes of home carer have been employed and trained as drivers on zero hour contracts. This has encouraged women into a non-traditional role and allowed all to build on their working hours and career opportunities.
- Overall of 51 posts advertised under ‘Delivering a Fairer Future’, there have been 19 successful applicants who have taken up clerical, care driving and land operative roles.
- The Council’s Return to Learn IT programme which is run in partnership with Unison has encouraged 35 women and 12 men to learn IT skills. The programme is specifically for people with no knowledge of computers and is enabling staff who in their current roles, don’t have access to or a need to use a PC to develop skills that they can use at home and in the workplace for career development.
- In 2008 South Lanarkshire Council was above the Scottish average for the percentage of highest paid two and five per cent of earners that were women, ranking 10th and 12th respectively.
- 37.1% of highest paid two per cent of earners were women in 2007/08
- 37.72% of highest paid two per cent of earners were women in 2008/09
- 47% of highest paid five per cent of earners were women in 2007/08
- 50.91% of highest paid five per cent of earners were women in 2008/09
- Equal pay work is an ongoing area of work and progress has been steady with increasing the numbers of women in higher grades. The Council has a workforce of 16,500 and this is split into 67% female and 33% male. At the time of our first equal pay review in 2005/06 women represented 84% of employees in the lowest grade band and only 35% of those in the top grade band. This has now changed and 80% of the lowest grade band and 40% of the top grade are now female.

Tackling disadvantage and deprivation

- The vocational development programmes offer over 1,000 young people from across South Lanarkshire’s schools the opportunity to try non-traditional roles either in a supported placement or in a college environment.
- Research done with Oxfam’s engender programme has enabled us to better understand how to attract boys and girls into non-traditional roles and this has informed both the publicity materials for the programme and the options that are being offered.

Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan 2009:

With all of the good work that has begun this year we are keen to keep learning about and developing the services we provide as a council. Our idea and message of ‘Delivering a Fairer Future’ will be reinvigorated so that all those living and working in our community understand and have the opportunity to do whatever they wish. With this in mind we are aware that work must continue and in line with the newly introduced Equality Bill we have set the aim of developing and publishing a Single Equality Scheme which will highlight and address the needs of everyone in our community no matter, race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or religion or belief. We want to use the high standards we have set out in our gender equality scheme to ensure that we are addressing with the same commitment the issues that matter to all members of our community. The gender equalities agenda will continue to be embedded in our day to day work and will remain at the heart of the values of the Council Plan, ‘Connect’.

Priorities for 2009:

- Develop and produce a Single Equality Scheme by November 2009;
- Create an internal website focusing on 'Delivering a Fairer Future' and highlighting the successes of those who have gained employment in non-traditional roles.
- Take our 'Delivering a Fairer Future' message out to the community to encourage employers and individuals to take up opportunities they may never have previously considered.

Conclusion:

In 2008-09 we have made progress but it is recognised that the challenge to involve and improve the lives of all in our community is one which goes on. As such, we aim to continue improving partnerships, both old and new, in the coming year to help us ensure that we raise the awareness of gender equality for everybody living in South Lanarkshire. We are committed to the improving the quality of services and opportunities we provide and, through this, the quality of life that we all lead in South Lanarkshire.

For more information or if you want this information in a different format or language, please phone 01698 453886 or email simon.cameron@southlanarkshire.gov.uk