

GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME (GES)

Agenda Item ..

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Background Papers:- Equality Standard for Local Government, Equality Act
Gender Equality Duty Draft Code of Practice
from the Equal Opportunities Commission

Financial Implications:- None identified

Equalities Implications:- This Scheme sets out the Council's arrangements for working its
gender equality duties.

Legal Implications:- Meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2006

Options:
1. To endorse the Scheme.
2. Not to endorse the Scheme

Risks: Non compliance with legislation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

The gender equality duty comes into force in April 2007 and is the biggest change to sex equality legislation in thirty years since the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act. The duty has been introduced to provide a tool to change the way in which public sector organisations think about :-

- the way they work
- the way that public services are designed and delivered.

The Equality Act 2006 places both general and specific duties on the Council in relation to delivering on gender equality. Under the general gender equality duty the Council must demonstrate that it is :-

- promoting equality of opportunity between women and men
- eliminating unlawful discrimination and harassment.

The Act also gives the Council specific duties in relation to gender equality, which include the publication of a Gender Equality Scheme by 30 April 2007.

2. The Gender Equality Scheme

The purpose of the Gender Equality Scheme is to show how the Council will meet the requirements of the general duty. It includes an action plan for implementing gender equality across the Council's range of services, including employment.

DECISION That the Cabinet approves the Gender Equality Scheme.

Braintree District Council

Gender Equality Scheme 2007 - 2010



BRAINTREE

DISTRICT
COUNCIL

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1. Introduction

The Equality Act 2006 amended the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 to place a statutory duty on all public authorities to promote gender equality. The gender equality duty comes into force on 6 April 2007 when all public authorities must demonstrate that they have due regard to the need

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

2. The gender equality duty

Despite 30 years of individual legal rights to sex equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission has identified that there is still widespread discrimination (not always intentional) and persistent gender inequality. Policies and practices that seem neutral can have a significantly different effect on women and on men, often contributing to greater gender inequality and poor policy outcomes. Individual legal rights by themselves have not been enough to change this.

The duty is intended to improve this situation, both for men and women, for boys and girls. Gender roles and relationships structure men's and women's lives. Women are frequently disadvantaged by policies and practices that do not recognise their greater caring responsibilities, the different pattern of their working lives, their more limited access to resources and their greater vulnerability to domestic violence and sexual assault. Men are also disadvantaged by workplace cultures that do not support their family or childcare responsibilities, by family services that assume they have little or no role in parenting, or by health services that do not recognise their different needs. Both sexes suffer from stereotyping of their roles and needs. The duty should help the public sector, and those working with it, to identify and respond to stereotyping, sex discrimination and sexism, resulting in improvements for all.

This is the first Gender Equality Scheme that has been produced by Braintree District Council with the aim of improving services for men and women living in the District. This Scheme sits alongside the Council's Race Equality and Disability Equality Schemes as

key tools for the Council to deliver services in a way that meets the real needs of all of its residents.

Braintree District Council recognises the need to promote gender equality and there have been many gender-related initiatives and examples of good practice that the Council has undertaken over the years. The aim of this Scheme is to have gender equality as a central part of the way that the Council works by putting it at the centre of policy making, service delivery, regulation and enforcement and employment practice.

3. The Gender Equality Scheme

In order to support progress in delivering on the general statutory duty to promote gender equality, all public authorities including Braintree District Council have a series of specific duties with which we must comply. These are :-

- To prepare and publish a gender equality scheme by 30 April 2007, showing how we will meet the general and specific duties and setting out gender equality objectives.
- To consider the need to address the causes of any gender pay gap.
- To gather and use information on how the public authorities policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services.
- To consult stakeholders (employees, service users and others) and take account of any relevant information in order to determine the gender equality objectives.
- To assess the impact of our current and proposed policies and practices in gender equality.
- To implement the actions set out in the gender equality scheme within three years unless it is unreasonable or impracticable to do so.
- To report against the scheme every year and review the scheme at least every three years.

Braintree District Council's Gender Equality Scheme meets these requirements and sets out our overall objectives for addressing and improving issues of gender inequality. It also includes an

action plan to take these objectives forward. It will help us :-

- To meet our requirements under the Equality Act 2006 and set out our plans to improve access to employment and services for both men and women.
- To make sure that we are meeting the different needs and views of men and women and taking these into account when we design or deliver services, make service improvements or develop policies.
- Continuously monitor and improve the way we deliver services to both men and women.

4. The population of Braintree District

Appendix 2 is the latest population estimates for Braintree District compiled by the Office for National Statistics. From the perspective of gender, the population of Braintree District is typical of the national picture, being fairly evenly matched across all age ranges until the age of 75+ when women are in the majority.

5. Braintree District Council as a service provider

The Council is committed to providing high standards of customer care and gives a high priority to making sure that services are accessible for everyone in the community. The removal of barriers to accessing services is therefore already integral to existing customer care practices that are focused around the individual needs of customers.

As part of the business planning system, equality impact assessments and improvement plans have already been carried out in all service areas in respect of race, disability and gender equality. These are due to be reviewed in 2007.

6. Braintree District Council as an employer

The Council already has employment policies and practices in place to support and monitor gender equality and eliminate sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace. The Council sets and monitors targets to ensure that it has a workforce that is representative of the population of the District as a whole. An Equal Pay Review was carried out in 2006 and the results of this Review are currently being implemented.

7. Communicating the gender equality scheme

The gender equality scheme clarifies Braintree District Council's approach to eliminating gender inequality. It is important that all staff across the Council work with the same approach and this scheme outlines the work that will be required for the Council to form a common understanding from the perspective of customer care, employment and service provision.

8. Braintree District Council's commitment to gender equality

Braintree District Council's Corporate Plan 2004 – 2008 outlines the direction and ambition of the Council to :-

- create a cleaner and greener District
- help people feel safe and well
- create a better place to live, work and play
- improve performance and deliver better value

Each theme has its own aims. Objectives and outcomes and individual and service plans identify the contribution to one or more of the themes. Where the work of one service may focus heavily on a theme, (e.g. Public Protection and Healthy Living Service would take the lead on the "help people feel safe and well" theme) other services would be able to contribute to the same theme in a supporting role (e.g. Street Scene's work supporting the previous example). The Council's approach is to mainstream activities across all services in order to remove barriers to accessing services. It is therefore important to us that all our staff work within the spirit of this gender equality scheme, as they already do with the race and disability equality schemes.

9. Working with key partners

The Council is committed to working with key partners to deliver a joint vision to create :-

- a District in which everyone is able to access high quality services and transport
- a District in which everyone takes responsibility for making it a safer, cleaner and healthier place to live
- a prosperous and vibrant District in which everyone is welcome and lives, plays and works together harmoniously

- a District in which everyone has the opportunity to meet their full potential and participate fully in decisions which affect their communities

These aims therefore set the context in achieving equality of opportunity for all. In partnership with others, Braintree District Council aims to deliver public services of a consistently high quality and improve the quality of life and life chances of all our communities. To support these aims the council will ensure that it is a well-managed organisation that is consistently improving services to the people of the District. To deliver better services the Council recognises the need to set its own core values, which symbolise the way it wants to work as an organisation.

1. Perform well and get things done
2. Respect and value customers and staff
3. Improve and learn
4. Deliver that bit extra
5. Efficient and effective

10. Consultation

It is recognised that the involvement of women and men of all ages within our communities will be critical to the success of this gender equality scheme and there will be ongoing consultation on the implementation of this Scheme with service users, employees, trades unions and other stakeholders.

11. Our objectives

This scheme sets out the framework within which Braintree District Council can promote gender equality and prevent sex discrimination against members of our communities, our service users and our employees. The following objectives are intended to complement and support this framework.

Objective 1 – We will promote gender equality by :-

- Giving our staff the tools to implement the gender equality duty in their work
- Identifying data and information to effectively assess how certain actions will affect women and men

- Removing barriers to accessing services and employment opportunities
- Tailoring services more to the specific needs of women and men
- Effectively engaging women and men from all groups in decision and policy making around issues that have a direct effect on them
- Encouraging good practice in the private sector through our advisory capacity and enforcement powers
- Upholding our guiding principles in our partnership working and procurement role

Objective 2 – We will tackle discrimination by :-

- Promoting positive images of men and women
- Challenging patronising or discriminating attitudes
- Dealing promptly with issues of harassment and sexual harassment of staff, service users and others, according to agreed procedures
- Implementing the findings of our Equal Pay Review
- Supporting and valuing transsexual people as staff and potential staff by identifying and removing barriers to recruitment and retention

12. Implementation of the Gender Equality Scheme

This Scheme is based on 8 core areas that form the action planning framework where we can build standards and focus on the actions that need to be taken. These areas are :-

1. Making sure the Gender Equality Scheme is put into practice
2. Identifying relevant functions and policies
3. Assessing and consulting on the likely impact of proposed policies
4. Monitoring Council policies for adverse impact
5. Communicating the results of assessment, consultation and monitoring
6. Making sure that there are no barriers to accessing services
7. Monitoring employment and supporting employees
8. Training staff and Members

Braintree District Council - Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan 2007 – 2010

Appendix 1

1. Making sure the Gender Equality Scheme is put into practice

Purpose: To ensure compliance with our duty to promote equality of opportunity for all by ensuring that gender equality is mainstreamed into all policies, functions and procedures of the Council

Action	Target / Outcomes	Lead	Timescale
Monitor the implementation of the Gender Equality Scheme (GES)	Gender equality mainstreamed into all Council services Annual reporting on progress of the GES	Equity and Access Group	Ongoing to 2010
Make the GES easily accessible and available to customers and staff	GES available in hard copy, electronically and in other different formats to meet the needs of customers Increased awareness of gender equality and the Council's commitment to eliminate discrimination	Equity and Access Group	Ongoing from publication of the GES
Prepare action plans to review functions, policies and procedures and all other elements of the Scheme	Increased awareness of the requirement to mainstream gender equality into all areas of business planning	Equity and Access Group All services	November 2007
Guidelines and advice to be developed and disseminated	To provide assistance in the implementation of the GES at a corporate level	Equity and Access Group	June 2007

2. Identifying relevant functions and policies			
Purpose: to give appropriate priority to the promotion of gender equality when carrying out functions and developing policy			
Action	Target / Outcomes	Lead	Timescale
Use the equality impact assessment process to review the Council's functions/policies in line with the duty to promote gender equality	To enable services to meet the requirements of the gender equality legislation contained in the Equality Act 2006	Equity and Access Group	Ongoing from Autumn 2007
3. Assessing and consulting on the likely impact of proposed policies			
Purpose: To determine how policies, functions and procedures have an affect on the lives of women and men and identify where this has an adverse effect			
Action	Target / Outcomes	Lead	Timescale
Review existing equality impact assessments as part of the 2007/08 service planning process and revise action plans to avoid adverse impact	Identification of real or potential adverse impact	Equity and Access Group All services	November 2007
Data relating to gender is monitored in a consistent manner throughout the Council	Services capturing gender-related data necessary for long term impact to be assessed	All services	March 2008

3. Assessing and consulting on the likely impact of proposed policies (cont)			
Action	Target / Outcomes	Lead	Timescale
Put arrangements in place to monitor any adverse impact identified	Evidence of ongoing and appropriate consultation is available and being used to inform decision making Service delivery is more able to meet the needs of service users	Equity and Access Group All services	March 2008
Incorporation of gender equality considerations into corporate business planning guidelines	Gender equality is integral to service delivery plans Local targets and outcomes improve service delivery	Equity and Access Group All services	Ongoing

4. Monitoring council policies for adverse impact			
Purpose: To build gender equality into the policy making process and to make that process clear, open and inclusive			
Action	Target / Outcomes	Lead	Timescale
Services undertake gender equality impact assessments when reviewing or developing policies	Likely and existing impact on gender equality identified and measures put in place to eliminate adverse impact	All services	March 2008
Services to collect adverse impact information	Information available for annual monitoring and equality audits	All services	March 2008

5.Communicating the results of assessment, consultation and monitoring**Purpose: To make sure that monitoring, assessment and consultation activities, and their results are clear to customers and staff**

Action	Target / Outcomes	Lead	Timescale
Arrangements are made for the results of assessments, consultation and monitoring to be published in accessible formats	Publicly available and accessible record of progress	All services	March 2008
Identify appropriate communication channels for different gender/community groups and employees undertaken through BDC's consultation mechanisms	Evidence of accessible communication channels being used	All services	Ongoing
Monitor user satisfaction on effectiveness of communication channels and accessibility of information	Increased accessibility of information to target groups	Policy and Performance	Ongoing

6. Making sure that there are no barriers to accessing services**Purpose: To remove the gender-related barriers that may prevent people using services**

Action	Target / Outcomes	Lead	Timescale
Use consultation and monitoring arrangements and other available means to identify the specific needs of customers that are related to their gender. Consider access to buildings, information and service delivery mechanisms as appropriate	Service needs identified in relation to gender Increased user satisfaction levels	All services	Ongoing
Use gender-related information to inform the review and design of services	Barriers to accessing services are removed	All services	Ongoing

7. Monitoring employment and supporting employees

Purpose: Information from monitoring will be used to develop schemes (if required) to lead a workforce that further represents the profile of the communities of Braintree District

Action	Target / Outcomes	Lead	Timescale
Ensure that the requirements of the gender equality duty are taken into account when policies are reviewed on the rolling review programme	HR policies support the duty to promote gender equality	HR	Ongoing
Promote and encourage wider flexible working practices across the Council where operationally possible	Provide a workforce that is flexible and motivated and provides services in accordance with business needs and efficiency requirements	HR	March 2008
Take into account the gender requirements of employees when considering requests for flexible working	Implementation of flexible working practices that do not discriminate on the grounds of gender	HR	March 2008
Monitor requests for flexible working using gender data to ensure that the process is free from discrimination	Increase in employee confidence that requests for flexible working are treated consistently throughout the organisation	HR	March 2008

7. Monitoring employment and supporting employees (cont)			
Action	Target / Outcomes	Lead	Timescale
Monitor the Equal Pay Review action plan carried out	Ensure that the recommendations of the Equal Pay Review are carried out	HR	Ongoing
Ensure that cases of sexual harassment in the workplace will not be tolerated by the Council and that the disciplinary and grievance procedure will be applied and gender data monitored where necessary	Provision of a workplace that is free from discrimination and harassment on the grounds of gender or gender reassignment	HR	March 2008
Ensure equal access to all employment opportunities for both genders and work to reduce any occupational segregation in salary grades SMG and above	Equal gender ratios in all salary grades SMG and above	HR	March 2008
Continue to increase and meet targets for BVPI 11a every year	More women in senior roles (top 5% of the organisation)	HR	Ongoing
Review childcare benefit scheme to ensure equal access to this benefit for both men and women	Access to childcare benefits will be available to all qualifying employees	HR	March 2009

7. Monitoring employment and supporting employees

Purpose: Information from monitoring will be used to develop schemes (if required) to lead a workforce that further represents the profile of the communities of Braintree District

Action	Target / Outcomes	Lead	Timescale
Update the Equal Opportunities Policy to ensure that this adequately supports and values transsexual and transgender employees and their needs	Provision of a fair and equal working environment that respects the dignity of individuals and the lifestyles they lead	HR	March 2008
Ensure that all barriers to the employment of transsexual and transgender employees have been removed and that it is clear to customers that the Council values diversity	The Council is seen as an employer that sets a good example for other local organisations to follow	HR	March 2008

8. Training

Purpose: To ensure that members and employees have the knowledge and skills to comply with the duty to promote gender equality

Action	Target / Outcomes	Lead	Timescale
Ensure that trainers (internal and external) include gender equality awareness (as appropriate) in their training sessions	Training reflects the requirements of the Gender Equality Scheme	Organisational development	Ongoing
Information on compliance with the gender equality duty is cascaded to Members and staff at all levels and appropriate training is arranged and monitored	Members and staff advised of new legislation Staff have the relevant information, commensurate with the requirements of their post and this can be evidenced by audit Specific training sessions have been held, attended by the appropriate Members and staff Training is monitored for appropriateness and relevance	Equity and Access Group Organisational Development	April 2007 July 2007
Continue to raise Member and staff awareness of gender equality duty	Up to date guidelines made available on IConnect	Equity and Access Group	April 2007

Appendix 2

Mid-2005 Population Estimates: Quinary age groups and sex for Braintree District

22UC	All	Male	Female
0	1,700	800	900
1-4	6,700	3,500	3,200
5-9	8,800	4,600	4,300
10-14	9,100	4,600	4,500
15-19	8,400	4,300	4,100
20-24	6,700	3,500	3,100
25-29	7,300	3,600	3,700
30-34	9,500	4,700	4,800
35-39	11,500	5,800	5,700
40-44	11,100	5,600	5,500
45-49	9,400	4,600	4,700
50-54	9,000	4,400	4,600
55-59	10,100	5,000	5,100
60-64	7,500	3,800	3,800
65-69	5,800	2,900	2,900
70-74	4,900	2,300	2,600
75-79	4,200	1,800	2,400
80-84	3,300	1,200	2,000
85-89	1,800	500	1,200
90+	1,100	300	800
All Ages	137,800	67,800	69,900

Source: Office for National Statistics

Nb. Figures may not add due to rounding