

CORPORATE EQUALITY SCHEME

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Councillor A Holliday
LEAD OFFICER: Martin Jepson – Head of Legal and Democratic Services
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Summary and Recommendation:	Recommends adoption of the attached Equality Scheme and Action Plan. That the attached Corporate Equality Scheme and Action Plan be adopted.
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2006 this Council adopted an Equalities Policy (meeting of 12th December 2006) in order to meet its statutory duties to have in place various Equalities Schemes.
- 1.2 Members will recall that Local Authorities' progress on Equality and Diversity is measured nationally by the level of the Equality Standard they have attained. This Council is currently working towards achieving Level 2 by March 2008.

2. CORPORATE EQUALITY SCHEME

- 2.1 One of the criteria for attaining Level 2 is that Local Authorities should have a Corporate Equality Scheme in place. The current Equalities Policy fulfills a very similar function to a Corporate Equality Scheme.
- 2.2 This opportunity has been therefore been taken to carry out a short review of our Equalities Policy re-word it as a Corporate Equality Scheme and review the previous Action Plans, bearing in mind that a number of Actions have now been achieved. It is recommended the amended Scheme and Plan now be adopted.

3. CORPORATE PLAN

- 3.1 There is a corporate commitment to achieve Level 2 by March 2008.

4. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 No Financial Implications. No Human Resource Implications arising from the Policy. Relevant staff have committed to the Actions shown in the Action Plans.

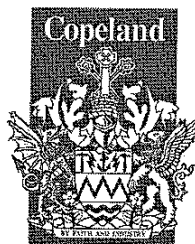
List of Appendices: Corporate Equality Scheme

List of Background Documents: None.

Corporate Equality Scheme

Incorporating the:
**Disability Equality Scheme,
Race Equality Scheme
and
Gender Equality Scheme**

February 2008



Copeland Borough Council

Contents

1	Introduction
2	General Principles
2.1	Policy and Service Planning and Delivery
2.2	Access
2.3	Recruitment, Employment and Training
2.4	Monitoring Progress and Performance
3	Race Equality
4	Disability Equality
5	Gender Equality
6	Sexual Orientation, Religion or Belief and Age
7	Action Plans

1. Introduction

Copeland Borough Council's vision is to treat everyone fairly and with respect. This Scheme outlines how the Council intends to meet the Equalities Standard for Local Government.

In adopting the standard, the Council underlines its commitment to equality of opportunity for all, **whether staff, residents or visitors**, and to redressing the institutional processes that can lead to discrimination.

As community leader and service provider, the Council aims to provide equal access to services and employment for all the people of the Borough. The Council is committed to ensuring that people are not discriminated against on the grounds of race, creed, colour, disability, age, religion, gender, marital status or parental responsibilities. Through the shared commitment of all the Council's officers and elected members, our policy recognises the responsibility to ensure that issues of equality and diversity are inherently linked to all decision-making processes.

Copeland Borough Council believes in providing high quality, flexible, inclusive and accessible services to everyone in the Borough. We are committed to improving the methods by which we consult with our customers and to focus on how those comments impact upon and form improvements in service delivery.

This Scheme has been developed in order to recognise, promote and value the diversity that exists within the Borough. It is based on principles of mutual respect, fairness, social inclusion, and a commitment to tackle inequality, injustice and discrimination.

The Scheme is designed to ensure that Copeland Borough Council complies with the range of equality and diversity legislation:

- Race Relations Act 1975
- Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Employment Equality Regulations (sexual orientation) 2003
- Employment Equality Regulations (religion or belief) 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- The Equality Act 2006
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006

This document is designed as a single Corporate Equality Scheme, and fulfilling the

legislative requirements for both race, disability and gender equality schemes.

2. General Principles

The Council is committed to:

- The development of strong, secure communities, free from discrimination, promoting cohesion and harmony.
- Equality in every area of responsibility, including policy making, service delivery, employment practice, regulation and enforcement.
- Acting positively to remedy existing inequalities.
- All its employees having a right to a working environment in which the dignity of individuals is respected.
- Providing a safe and healthy workplace for its employees, free from harassment and discrimination.
- Promoting equal treatment for all employees and potential employees irrespective of race, creed, colour, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnic origins, religion, disability, age, gender, marital status, or parental responsibilities. The Council will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, bullying or violence by or against any employee or Member.
- Providing development opportunities to assist with the implementation of this policy and; ensuring that staff and elected members are aware of their individual responsibilities and the organisation's commitment.

The Council will work to ensure that no resident or visitor receives less favourable treatment, including:

- Men and women of all ages, irrespective of marital status
- Children and young people
- People with differing:
 - Physical and sensory abilities
 - Learning abilities
 - Health and mental health conditions
- People from all races, irrespective of place of birth
- People who are lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, or transgender
- People from all cultures and religions and with differing beliefs
- People who are socially excluded, whether through education or skill levels, unemployment or reliance on state benefits; or residential location, including living rurally

- Settled people and those who travel

The Council will deliver this commitment by

- Developing policies and guidelines to support its staff.
- Supporting and encouraging initiatives which promote equality of opportunity and social inclusion.
- Confronting unlawful discrimination, tackling prejudice and promoting equality of opportunity through learning and development.
- Ensuring that recruitment and selection is carried out in accordance with best practice and avoids discrimination on the grounds of race, disability, gender, etc.
- Managing staff fairly and appropriately ensuring there is no discrimination in terms of attitude, work allocations, promotions or other conditions of employment.
- Recording, reporting and responding to allegations of discrimination and harassment; providing appropriate support to the alleged victims.
- Regularly reviewing our Corporate Equality Scheme.

The Council will work specifically in the following areas to ensure equality of treatment.

2.1. Policy and Service Planning and Delivery

We will:

- Identify our policies and services; prioritising them in relation to their impact on equality.
- Complete Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) as required on these policies, procedures and services.
- Act on any apparent inequality identified through the EIA process to ensure that it is eliminated.
- Report on progress made against our EIA action plans and equality scheme action plans; publishing those reports on our website.
- Produce a summary report annually on progress against our action plans; publishing the report on our website.
- Use EIAs within service areas when target setting, as part of their service planning process. Service areas will state, within their service plans, what their targets and objectives are in terms of equality and how they will achieve them.
- Regularly consult with public, private and voluntary sector bodies and partners; service users and access groups (including hard to reach groups) to drive our

equalities work forward.

- Ensure that our methods of procuring goods and services does not discriminate; and that organisations providing services in partnership with or on behalf of the Council adhere to our equality practices; specifically that their own policies will include as a minimum:
 - A commitment to equal opportunities.
 - The name or position of the person responsible for the effective implementation of the Scheme.

2.2. Access

We will work to ensure that barriers to access are removed; whether physical barriers to buildings, transport or open spaces; or barriers to information for residents, visitors and employees.

We will remove barriers to information by ensuring that information is available in a range of accessible formats on request, including:

- CDs and tapes
- Web based downloads
- Braille
- Different languages

In addition, we will provide arrangements for interpretation and translation services; and for British Sign Language interpreters.

We will remove physical access barriers by:

- Assessing our buildings against the M-standard; and where not to standard develop action plans to mitigate. These plans will be monitored and progress reported annually.
- Making reasonable adjustments for disabled staff working in inaccessible environments.
- Developing alternatives to accessing services where required.
- Working in partnership with other organisations to improve accessibility to transport.
- Working with disability organisations and partners to ensure that streets and open spaces are accessible.
- Working to the Council's 'Accessible Information Policy'.

2.3. Recruitment, Employment and Training

Employees are legally protected from discrimination and harassment at work throughout the employment relationship, including during the recruitment process; in the workplace; on dismissal and, in certain circumstances, after employment has finished. This protection also applies to terms and conditions, pay, promotions, transfers, training and dismissals.

As an employer the Council should strive to have a workforce that reflects the population it serves, achieving a balance of gender, ethnic group, disability and age. To support this we will:

- Recruit people based on skills, ability, competencies and potential, ensuring that our recruitment procedures are not unlawfully discriminatory.
- Ensure our publicity for vacancies does not unfairly restrict the range of applicants
- Select based on skills and ability.
- Promote on ability or potential.
- Offer training to encourage the development of all employees.
- Select for redundancy (if we need to) based on an analysis of people's skill, unbiased by considerations of age, gender, etc.
- Consider individual and business needs in considering our policy on retirement, to promote flexibility and effectiveness.
- Support employees in making personal choices about their parenting, caring and work roles.
- Support and enable flexible working to help employees who wish to do so balance their lives inside and outside work.
- Improve development and progression opportunities for part-time workers.
- Ensure that female and male employees are paid the same for doing equal work and have the same service conditions.
- Challenge sexism by our employees, other organisations and users of our services.
- Deal effectively and consistently with harassment.

2.4 .Monitoring Progress and Performance

As part of our commitment to equality and diversity we will:

- Monitor complaints by individual and groups through our formal complaints

procedure and hate incidents reporting procedure to identify and highlight possible inequalities.

- Ensure complaints concerning equality and diversity issues raised by employees are dealt with through the harassment or grievance procedure or Confidential Reporting Code, whichever is appropriate.
- Monitoring will be included in any customer satisfaction surveys, one off surveys and any other consultation processes we undertake.
- Information about the Council's progress on equality and diversity will be published on our website.

3. Race Equality

Copeland Borough Council is fully committed to complying with its statutory duties under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2002, specifically:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination
- To promote equality of opportunity
- To promote good relations between people of different racial groups

To meet this commitment we will:

- Consider the impact on ethnic groups in service planning and provision through the EIA process.
- Act on any apparent inequality identified through the EIA process to ensure that it is eliminated.
- Report on progress made against our EIA action plans and equality scheme action plans; publishing those reports on our website.
- Ensure that information about our services is accessible and available to members of all ethnic groups.
- Ensure our services are accessible and available to members of all ethnic groups.
- Record, report and respond to racial incidences.
- Develop the competencies of all staff at all levels throughout the organisation in relation to issues of race.
- Monitor and report the numbers of staff and applicants for employment from the different racial groups.

4. Disability Equality

The Council is aware that people with disabilities often experience discrimination and disadvantage in society largely because of attitudes and actions. The Council is committed to tackling disability discrimination as both service providers and employers. It aims to make all services inclusive and accessible and to act positively to remedy existing inequalities faced by people with disabilities.

The Council commits to its general duties under the legislation to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled and other persons.
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
- Eliminate harassment of disabled people.
- Promote positive attitudes to disabled people.
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life.
- Take into account a disabled person's disability even if it means treating the disabled person more favourably.

To meet this we will:

- Nominate a member of staff to deal with disability equality and access issues.
- Provide auxiliary aids and services where appropriate.
- Make changes and adaptations to buildings and other areas over which it has control to improve accessibility.
- Support all employees with disabilities to fully develop their potential.
- Consider the impact on disabled people in service planning and provision through the EIA process described above. These impact assessments will be sent to disability organizations for review before the final version is published.
- Act on any apparent inequality identified through the EIA process to ensure that it is eliminated.
- Report on progress made against our EIA action plans and equality scheme action plans; publishing those reports on our website.
- Develop and strengthen the existing consultation mechanism with the disability community in the Borough by continuing to work in partnership and supporting Copeland Disability Forum's Access Working Group.
- Carry out, review and develop our commitments under the Employment Service 'Positive about Disabled People' scheme. This scheme welcomes applicants with a disability; guarantees to interview all candidates with a disability that meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy; and to consider them on their abilities.

5. Gender Equality

The Equality Act 2006 created the Gender Equality Duty for all Public Sector bodies.

The duty places more responsibility with the service provider to think strategically about gender equality rather than leaving it to individuals to challenge poor practice.

The promotion of equal opportunities between women and men requires public authorities to recognise that the two groups are not starting from an equal footing and identical treatment will not always be appropriate.

Copeland Borough Council is committed to comply with the new statutory requirements and our Gender Equality Objectives are as follows:

- **Eliminate discrimination and harassment.**
- **Promote equality including equal pay if a gender gap is found to exist**

In order to do this we will:

1. Gather information on how the Council's policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the **delivery** of services.
2. Consult our stakeholders including employees, service users and others, including trade unions and take account of relevant information in order to determine its gender equality objectives.
3. Carry out Equality Impact Assessments of its current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality.
4. To **implement** the actions set out in its scheme within three years.
5. To **report** against the scheme each year and **review** the scheme at least every 3 years.

6. Sexual Orientation, Religion or Belief and Age

Although there is currently no requirement for Equality Schemes for sexual orientation, religion or belief and age, the Council intends to pursue its Equality and Diversity agenda as if such schemes were in place, committing itself to information gathering, consultation with relevant stakeholders, carry out Equality Impact Assessments with these strands in mind and incorporating the outcomes of such assessments into Action Plans.

Action Plans

General Equalities Actions

Issue	Action	By Who	By When
Raise awareness with Members	Training	Member Training	Yearly as part of Member training
Equalities training for Managers	Roll out training	Martin Jepson/ Hilary Mitchell	Yearly – rolling training programme
Equalities training for all	Use our e-learning package for new starters	Martin Jepson/ Hilary Mitchell	As new starters arrive
Equality Impact Assessments (EIA)	Train and roll out EIA 's across all service areas	All Managers	Began July 2007 and continuing through 2008
Procurement	Ensure equalities issues dealt within the procurement process	Chris Lloyd	December 2008
Work with Partners	Ensure joint actions address equality issues in accordance with partnership protocols.	Corporate Team	From Dec 2007 onwards
Monitor equality forms completed during the recruitment process	Monitor & publish results from equality forms	Len Gleed	March 2008 and annually
Improve accessibility to Council documents	Standards for font sizes Standards for colour contrast	Communications	Review March 2008 and annually
Improve access to Council services	Address within Customer First projects	Jane Salt	Review March 2008 and annually

Discriminatory incidents	Publicise incidents and actions taken on our website. Monitor occurrence and actions taken to mitigate.	Martin Jepson	March 2008 and annually
Equality and Diversity Standard	Achieve Level 2 of the standard Achieve Level 3 of the standard	Martin Jepson	March 2008 March 2009
Communications	Ensure communications plan includes equality issues	Communications	Review March 2008 and annually
Consultation	Develop a structured approach to consultation – including the identification of suitable forums, hard to reach groups.	Martin Jepson	March 2008
Document reviews	Complete at least an annual review of equalities documents	Martin Jepson	March 2008 and annually

Race Equalities Actions

Issue	Action	By Who	By When
Council literature in other languages	Issue a guide for translation services	Ian Curwen	March 2008 and review annually
Interpretation services	Provide interpretation services as required	Ian Curwen	As required
Minority groups consultation	Develop structured approach to consultation with minority groups (see consultation action above)	Martin Jepson	March 2008
Satisfaction with how racial incidences are handled	Develop process to gain feedback of how any racial incident has been dealt with. Monitor and report feedback on how racial incidents are dealt with.	Equalities Group	March 2008 and annually

Disability Equalities Actions Gender Equalities Actions

Issue	Action	By Who	By When
Access issues: Copeland Centre & Moresby	Ensure access for disabled. Ensure no-one excluded	Chris Lloyd/ David Mullen	Incomplete
Embed equality issues in planning	Increased awareness for all disability issues	Heather Morrison	Continuing
Services and policies do not meet the needs of disabled people	Send all EIAs for review by disability groups	Martin Jepson	When drafted

Gender Equalities Actions

Issue	Action	By Who	By When
Gender Pay Gap	To carry out a equal pay review and ensure fair and equal pay policies are in place	L Glead C Shackley	Dec 08
Ensure all staff and treated fairly and with dignity	Eliminate discrimination and harassment towards current and potential transsexual staff.	M Jepson	Review March 2008 and annually
Gender Equality Training for staff	Through e-learning package for new starters	L Glead	Annually

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