

Directorate of Corporate Resources

Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2011/12

1.0 Introduction / purpose of plan

- 1.1 The Council's Equality and Diversity Policy sets out its overall long term policy framework for achieving equality and diversity. The policy is supported by the detailed arrangements, priorities and actions in the Council's Equality Scheme. The policy requires all directorates to produce annual equality and diversity action plans and annual reports. The Directorate of Corporate Resources Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2011/12 describes how the directorate will implement the policy and the scheme in relation to its responsibilities, service areas and employment practices during the year.
- 1.2 The Directorate of Corporate Resources Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2011/12 is submitted to the Select Committee on the Environment before approval by the appropriate Cabinet Member through the decision sheet process.
- 1.3 This is the first equality and diversity action plan of the new Directorate of Corporate Resources, the structure of which was agreed by Cabinet on 27th October 2010, and which formally commenced on 1st January 2011. The plan covers the period April 2011 to March 2012 and contains:
 - an explanation of its relationship with other plans
 - a summary of the directorate's equality and diversity vision and values
 - key issues and targets for the plan
 - the detailed action plan.
- 1.4 A combined annual report setting out achievements against the Equality and Diversity Action Plans for 2010/11 for the former Directorates of Finance, ICT and Procurement and Law, Property and HR will be completed at the end of the financial year.

2.0 Relationship with other plans

- 2.1 This action plan will form part of the overall strategic plan for the Directorate of Corporate Resources for 2011/12. The strategic plan in turn responds to the Borough Community Strategy 2020 and the Council Plan, where the overall vision is for stronger communities to be delivered through six key themes of:
 - Jobs and prosperity
 - Health and well being
 - Heritage, culture and leisure

- Environment and housing
- Individual and community learning
- Community safety

- 2.2 In addition to the above, the Council Plan includes a Quality Services priority to ensure good governance and best use of resources. As members are aware, the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review has meant that the Council is having to plan and implement budget reductions, which may have some impact on the delivery of this Equality and Diversity Action Plan during 2011/12.
- 2.3 This action plan also reflects objectives in other key corporate plans, including the Revenue Budget Strategy, the Medium Term Financial Strategy, the Human Resources Strategy, the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy and the Procurement Strategy.
- 2.4 In accordance with legal requirements, the Council has previously published an equality scheme, outlining its overall approach and key actions. While a specific document will no longer be a statutory requirement from April 2011, the overall equality scheme will be reframed to comply with the new requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Anticipating the requirements of the Act, the revised disability and gender equality schemes (published in December 2009 and April 2010 respectively) and the supplement covering age, religion or belief, sexual orientation and transgender equality (approved by the Cabinet in June 2009) provide a good starting point.
- 2.5 Council-wide progress in promoting equality is reported each year in the Annual Review of Equality and Diversity, which is submitted to the Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education (as the select committee with responsibility for corporate equality and diversity issues) and the Cabinet for approval.

3.0 Vision and Values

- 3.1 In 2009 the Council agreed a ten year vision for equality, which will contribute to the achievement of the Community Strategy. In 2019 the Council will be one:
- which will be recognised nationally as a leading Council on equality and diversity
 - which had improved its response to the needs of the borough's communities
 - whose services receive high satisfaction ratings from across the borough's communities
 - whose workforce reflects the local community at all levels of the organisation and for which people from all backgrounds want to work
 - which has improved its equality training and the skills of its employees in dealing with all customers.
- 3.2 The overall objective of the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy is to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
 - promote equality of opportunity

- promote good relations and positive attitudes between people of diverse backgrounds.

in its employment policies and practices, services and its engagement with partners and the communities of the borough. The Council aims to ensure that no job applicants, employees, residents or service users receive less favourable treatment on any grounds which cannot be shown to be justified. This covers race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, gender, marital status, responsibility for children or other dependants, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, trade union or political activities, social class, where the person lives or spent convictions.

3.3 The Directorate supports the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and is committed to implementing that policy, through building an organisation which values diversity in the workforce, by maintaining an environment which maximises the contribution each person can make to the Directorate in serving the needs of a diverse society. The Directorate's commitment to Equality and Diversity will be achieved through:

- Reviewing services, policies and procedures
- Consulting with customers and employees
- Undertaking impact assessments
- Action planning and reporting procedures
- Designating responsibility for actions to named officers
- Providing learning and development opportunities to employees
- Working effectively with partners in the voluntary, not for profit and commercial sector in delivering services

3.4 In delivering services, the directorate aims to provide value for money and a high level of customer satisfaction. It actively seeks and participates in external evaluation of its services and in the last year has achieved or maintained standards such as Customer Service Excellence and LEXCEL over a significant area of its operation.

Directorate Structure and Services

3.5 The Directorate is organised over four separate divisions, as follows:

Customer Services Division

The division provides a front line customer contact centre for a wide range of Council services through Dudley Council Plus. The division also manages Housing & Council Tax Benefits, Council Tax, Business Rates, Registration, Citizenship, Coroner & Celebratory Services and Commercial Services (Curatorial, Crown Centre, Dudley Market and CCTV), all of which involve dealing directly with the public.

Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development Division

The division provides a full range of HR management support for all the Council's directorates and schools, aimed at enabling and supporting a high performing and continually improving workforce and organisation culture, within the framework and challenges of Council priorities and plans. It supports the development of HR management by the design and implementation of HR standards, strategies and policy across the Council. The function includes

providing services such as payroll and pensions, learning and development and occupational health, alongside HR functions such as recruitment and retention, managing absence and performance.

Law and Governance Division

The division provides advice and support for the Council's legal, democratic, health and safety and property / asset requirements, as well as the Licensing function. It also supports the rest of the directorate in planning and managing performance.

Treasurer's Division

The division provides advice and support for the Council's financial requirements through Accountancy, Audit and Procurement services, ensuring resources are properly managed. It is also responsible for providing the Council with ICT services, including systems and networks, as well as advice, support and training in their use.

Staffing

- 3.6 As at February 2011, the directorate employed 962 staff, with a gender composition of 32.3% male and 67.7% female. 8.4% of employees were from a black and minority ethnic (BME) background, while 3.4% of employees had stated that they had a disability. Directorate action in relation to managing employees follows the Council's HR Strategy and Action Plan 2009-14, which focuses on the following priorities:

- People and performance management
- Leadership
- Skills development, flexibility and organisational change
- Pay and reward
- Recruitment, retention and diversity

Training and development needs of employees in the directorate are identified in annual performance review and development (PRD) discussions with their line manager. Employee views are sought on a range of issues through the bi-annual corporate survey, the results of which helps shape the way the Council's treats its staff.

Roles and responsibilities

- 3.7 Specific responsibility for promoting equality and diversity in employment and services within the Directorate rests with the Management Team (Director, Treasurer and three Assistant Directors). Heads of services and other managers in the directorate are responsible for ensuring that the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy is implemented. A principal officer is responsible for the overall coordination of equality and diversity issues, communicating key issues to employees, updating policies, targets and equality impact assessments, as well as monitoring progress. All employees have a responsibility to comply with the requirements of the Council's equality and diversity policy in all dealings with Members, other employees, job applicants, residents, service users and other members of the public, and with other organisations.

4.0 Key Issues and Targets for 2011/12

4.1 The key issues highlighted below reflect the directorate's responsibility for providing support services to the Council, delivering services direct to the public and managing its own employees. The numbers in brackets relate to items in the action plan.

a) Service provision and delivery:

- Continue with annual reviews against the Customer Service Excellence standard and extend to other areas of the Customer Services division (1.1)
- Review options for delivering customer services (1.2)
- Review customer engagement across the directorate (1.3)
- Review options for benefit take-up work (2.1)

b) Human Resources Strategy:

- Ensure employees receive appropriate training and development opportunities including equality and diversity knowledge and skills (3.1) (3.2)
- Improve the employee information held (4.1)
- Support directorates with their workforce planning (4.2)
- Complete the pay and grading review exercise (4.3)

c) ICT Strategy and service transformation:

- Promote equality through the ICT strategy (Section 5)

d) Procurement Strategy

- Promote equality through the Procurement strategy (Section 6)

e) Implications arising from the establishment of the Directorate of Corporate Resources (7.1)

f) Cross directorate and corporate initiatives, including priorities identified in the 2010 review of Equality and Diversity:

- Respond to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (3.1, 3.2, 8.1)
- Undertake equality impact assessments (8.2)
- Respond to the recommendations of the Equality and Diversity Audit 2010 (8.3)
- Report to on HR equalities issues and options for achieving Council 10 year equality ambition (8.4)

4.2 The results of consultation and engagement activities, whether as part of Equality Impact Assessments or other initiatives, inform the Equality and Diversity Action Plan. Consultation activities include face to face, telephone, online and written surveys as well as focus groups and large scale events. Details of consultations are entered on the Council's Community Engagement Database, which can be viewed by the public.

4.3 Progress in achieving the targets set in the plan will be reported quarterly to the directorate management team. Any issues regarding performance will be addressed and followed up as part of the directorate's usual performance management process.

5.0 The Action Plan

- 5.1 The detailed 2011/12 Action Plan is set out in Appendix 1, showing priorities, objectives, lead officers, target dates and planned outcomes / performance indicators.

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Appendix 1

Directorate of Corporate Resources - Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2011/12

Note – for explanation of abbreviations see end of Action Plan

Objective	Detailed Action / Target / Lead Officer(s)	Target Date / Milestones	Planned Outcome / performance indicators
Priority 1 – Improve customer access to services, ensuring high levels of customer satisfaction			
1.1 Maintain and increase the number of services within the directorate achieving the Customer Service Excellence standard.	Extend the Customer Service Excellence Standard to the new services included in the Customer Services Division. <i>Mike Williams (AD – Customer Services) / Menna Flavell (Law and Governance)</i>	November 2011	Improved service standards leading to higher levels of satisfaction across all customer groups. Satisfaction levels are measured and monitored.
1.2 Review the options for delivering customer services through a variety of access options	(1) Due to Dudley town centre redevelopment plans, identify suitable new location for Dudley Council Plus. Plan for and achieve a facility that reflects the needs of different groups of customers, e.g. people registering deaths and people requiring support with making payment. (2) Review customer reception points and opening times within the directorate. Identify and establish further / alternative customer access	March 2012 Autumn 2011	Customer satisfaction with new location(s), facilities, access to services and range of services provided.

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	centres e.g. in Stourbridge (Dudley Council Plus and Registration Services). (3) Identify and implement further services to be delivered from DC+. <i>Mike Williams and Sean Beckett (Customer Services)</i> <i>Steve Cooper (Law and Governance)</i>	September 2011 and ongoing	
1.3 Review customer engagement	Review the external customer engagement process across the directorate, aiming for improved consistency of approach and better use of resources. <i>Community engagement team / Marketing and Communications</i>	October 2011	Improved understanding of customer requirements which will allow for better targeting of resources.
Priority 2 – Contribute to reducing poverty and social exclusion within the borough			
2.1 Maximise take-up of benefits and other reductions by priority groups	(1) Review the options for benefit take-up work in the light of budget constraints, with the aim of targeting resources on the most deprived areas of the community. (2) Remind council tax and business	July 2011 and ongoing March / April	Increased income for the poorest residents will contribute to improved outcomes in a range of areas including health, mobility, housing, learning, jobs. In general, reduced council tax and business rates liability is beneficial for both the taxpayers concerned and the Council's collection performance. Take-up of benefit and council tax /

Objective	Detailed Action / Target / Lead Officer(s)	Target Date / Milestones	Planned Outcome / performance indicators
	rate payers of the discounts and other reductions they may be entitled to. <i>Liz Ralph / Ian Wollaston (Customer Services)</i>	2011	business rate reductions during the year can be quantified.
Priority 3 – Improve employee knowledge and skills			
3.1 Build on the Equality and Diversity training strategy that encompasses a range of learning options to meet the competency levels required for different levels of employees	(1) Develop a robust learning plan for equality and diversity. (2) Implement the e-learning package for Equality and Diversity. <i>Sarah Treneer (HR and Organisational Development)</i>	December 2011 April 2011	Improved knowledge, understanding and therefore compliance with the law, for both employment and service delivery. This will help the Council achieve its 10 year vision for equality. Numbers attending and completing equality training courses will be measured, as will whether staff felt more informed as a result of undertaking training.
3.2 Ensure employees receive appropriate training and development to enable them to fulfil their roles	(1) Undertake a review of the Council's PRD process to ensure it continues to meet service needs. <i>Sarah Treneer</i> (2) Ensure that all directorate employees undergo an annual PRD meeting.	December 2011 March 2012	Employees will be better prepared to meet the challenges of the job at times when resources are reducing, avoiding customer dissatisfaction. Employees provided with fair access to learning and development opportunities. Extent of use of the PRD process will be monitored.

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	<i>Divisional Heads</i>		
Priority 4 – Promote equality through the HR Strategy			
4.1 Improve the employee information held	Use of annual trigger to employees to review the content of YourSelf in relation to their personal data. <i>PSE Team (HR and Organisational Development)</i>	March 2012	Individual employee data will be regularly reviewed and updated.
4.2 Support Directorates with workforce planning, implementing and dealing with change and monitoring the impact of change	(1) Offer facilitated workforce planning sessions to management teams when they are considering their service plans. (2) Provide training for managers and employees in dealing with change (Facing the Future sessions). <i>Heads of HR and Corporate Learning and Development</i>	March – May 2011 Available from February 2011	Managers will have a better understanding of the pressures on the service and how to respond positively to them. Managers and employees will be better equipped to deal with the impact of change on themselves as individuals.
4.3 Support the pay and grading review (Project Sponsor John Millar (DUE) / Project Manager Pete Sanford (Chief Exec's))	(1) Complete pay modelling with unions. (2) Undertake negotiations with unions with aim of agreeing new grading and pay structure. (3) Agree implementation date and	During 2011	New pay and grading structure implemented.

Objective	Detailed Action / Target / Lead Officer(s)	Target Date / Milestones	Planned Outcome / performance indicators
	appeals process. <i>HR working in conjunction with project sponsor and manager</i>		
Priority 5 – Promote equality through the ICT strategy			
5.1 Refresh the Council's web site with view to making it more interactive and citizen focused	Implement the latest release of content management software and using a 'virtual team' of web developers from across directorates; work to redevelop and re-launch the website. <i>Andrew Tromans (ICT Services)</i>	October 2011	Improved access leading to higher levels of satisfaction across all customer groups.
5.2 Improve accessibility of training facilities	Use e-learning tools to provide online access to current courses and new learning materials. <i>Pete Hipkiss (ICT Services)</i>	December 2011	Provision of a wider and more flexible range of training facilities.
5.3 Develop video conferencing facility further to offer flexibility and reduce travel	Investigate and exploit the potential of technologies such as (i) video conferencing and (ii) speech recognition to overcome accessibility issues (e.g. for use in libraries). <i>Lance Cartwright (ICT Services)</i>	September 2011	Provision of more flexible options for managing meetings, working from home etc. Deliver digital inclusion through the provision of wider facilities.
5.4 Continue to extend the availability of e-service options	Update and transfer all existing online forms to a new system (Achieveforms). Examples include forms requesting services such as Telecare and the	March 2012	Improved usability and accessibility thus improving access to information and communication between government, council and public.

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	Assisted Collection facility. <i>Pete Hipkiss (ICT Services)</i>		
5.5 Extend guest wi-fi service as required	Liaise with libraries and community sites to extend service where supported by a business case. <i>Pete Hipkiss (ICT Services)</i>	Ongoing	Improved access leading to higher levels of satisfaction across all customer groups.
Priority 6 – Promote equality through the Procurement strategy			
6.1 Comply with Equality Act requirements and relevant codes of practice (due to be published in Spring / Summer 2011)	(1) Review and update the Procurement Strategy and policies / toolkit. (2) Develop the use of equality related award criteria and contract conditions, where they relate to the subject matter of the contract and are proportionate. <i>(Ian Clarke, Head of Procurement)</i>	October 2011 June 2010	Compliance with the Equality Act and codes of practice will lead to improved services that are more appropriate and responsive to the needs of different groups.
6.2 Improve and promote the information available for staff, suppliers, service providers and contractors with regard to the Procurement requirements of the Equality Act 2010	(1) Review wording re. Equality on Procurement web pages. (2) Raise awareness of Procurement equality issues within directorates through the Procurement Champions and Procurement Support Group.	October 2011	Employee knowledge of equality issues regarding procurement will improve leading to improved services as above. Increased awareness by suppliers, service providers and contractors regarding Council's expectations re equality and the

Objective	Detailed Action / Target / Lead Officer(s)	Target Date / Milestones	Planned Outcome / performance indicators
	<i>(Ian Clarke, Head of Procurement)</i>		award of contracts; Equality Act principles being embraced in working practices.
Priority 7 – Deal with implications arising from establishment of Directorate of Corporate Resources			
7.1 Deal with organisational implications of the establishment of the Directorate of Corporate Resources (equality and diversity related)	Develop a set of values, behaviours and standards for the new directorate. <i>Sarah Treneer</i>	September 2011	Ensure that staff and customers are treated consistently and fairly in line with Directorate standards.
Priority 8 – Support cross directorate and corporate initiatives			
8.1 Respond to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010	(1) Support the corporate revision of the equality scheme. (2) Support the review of the approach to EIAs. (3) Review what services need to respond to the public sector duties and address requirements. (4) Review requirements for publication of equality information, working with Chief Executive's Directorate to provide comprehensive and meaningful data on the Council's website.	September 2011 as above June 2011 July 2011	Have an approach that is flexible enough to respond to the approach of the organisation and the needs of the local community. Meet legal requirements and work towards the government's vision of a fairer society.

Objective	Detailed Action / Target / Lead Officer(s)	Target Date / Milestones	Planned Outcome / performance indicators
	<p><i>Menna Flavell in conjunction with CEDLG</i></p> <p>(5) Update the equality monitoring categories used by the Council HR system (PSE) to reflect 2011 Census and Equality Act requirements.</p> <p><i>PSE Team and ICT Services</i></p>	March 2012	Will enable more extensive and accurate equality monitoring.
8.2 Continue to embed EIAs	<p>(1) EIAs to be undertaken of all new or revised policies and new or changed service areas</p> <p>(2) Existing EIAs to be reviewed and actions relating to previous EIAs to be addressed</p> <p><i>All divisional and service heads</i></p>	March 2012	EIAs help assess the effect that new or changed policies and services may have on the public and the workforce. They are therefore an essential part of the decision making process.
8.3 Equality and Diversity Audit 2010	<p>Review the detailed recommendations and address outstanding issues by the agreed deadlines</p> <p><i>Menna Flavell in conjunction with CEDLG / DMT</i></p>	Various up to December 2011	Risk of various breaches is minimised through adhering to recommended procedures. Consistency of approach is maintained throughout the Council.
8.4 Report to Corporate Board on HR Equalities issues and options for achieving the Council's 10 year equality ambition.	<p>(1) Report to Corporate Board</p> <p>(2) Develop action plan to implement agreed actions</p>	<p>April 2011</p> <p>June 2011</p>	Agree and implement actions approved by Corporate Board and work towards stated Council ambition.

Objective	Detailed Action / Target / Lead Officer(s)	Target Date / Milestones	Planned Outcome / performance indicators
	<i>Margot Worton, Head of HR supporting Central directorates</i>		

Abbreviations:

AD Assistant Director

CEDLG Corporate Equality and Diversity Leadership Group (nominated equality and diversity lead officers for each directorate, who ensure that equality and diversity is integral to the Council's work and that procedures comply with equality legislation and best practice).

DCR Directorate of Corporate Resources

DMT Directorate Management Team

EIA Equality Impact Assessment

PRD Performance Review and Development (the Council's employee appraisal process, which provides a structured annual opportunity for managers and employees to discuss individual performance and learning and development requirements)