

Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement

Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2007/08

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Annual Report describes the Finance Directorate's activities throughout 2007/08 in supporting the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy, in relation to both employment and service delivery. The report summarises progress in achieving corporate and directorate objectives. It also provides key facts and background information about the directorate.
- 1.2 In previous years, the Annual Report was combined with the Equality and Diversity Action Plan for the following year. The two elements are now presented separately:
- a) to ensure that targets and actions are in place at the start of the new financial year
 - b) to enable results to be reported for the whole of the previous financial year.

The Action Plan (2008/09) was considered by the Select Committee on Environment on 6th March 2008 and subsequently approved by the Cabinet Member for Finance through the Decision Sheet process.

2.0 Background Information and Key Facts about the Finance Directorate

- 2.1 Underpinning the Council's Vision, as outlined in the Council Plan, the Finance Directorate provides the following service areas:

- Audit Services
- Benefit Services
- Dudley Council Plus
- Financial Services
- Information Communication Technology (ICT) Services
- Purchasing and Payment Services
- Revenue Services.

The directorate's aim is to secure best value for the Council by:

- Serving its customers
- Promoting good stewardship of public funds
- Supporting the Council's objectives as detailed in the Council Plan
- Providing good staff management
- Promoting equality and diversity, ensuring equal opportunity for all.

- 2.2 The Directorate publishes an annual Strategic Plan, to inform staff, internal customers and Council Members of its work. The plan, which is available on the Council's Intranet, sets out the Directorate's objectives, priorities and targets for the year, including those for equality and diversity issues. The main plan provides comprehensive links into other key documents including divisional business plans. Performance in achieving action plan targets is measured and managed through regular meetings between senior

management and divisional (service) heads, and is formally reviewed by the directorate's management team on a quarterly basis.

- 2.3 Within the directorate, high priority is given to ensuring all practices (e.g. recruitment, employment, learning and development, procurement, use of technology) and service delivery comply with equality and diversity policies and current legislation. A member of the directorate management team is lead officer for equality and diversity, and a principal officer has specific responsibility to ensure directorate activities are linked to the corporate agenda, enabling policies to be translated into action at directorate and divisional level. This includes liaising with senior management and divisional heads, providing advice and direction, monitoring progress and preparing regular progress reports.

3.0 Employment

Workforce Profile

- 3.1 As at 31st March 2008, the Finance Directorate employed 664 staff in 7 service areas (having taken on responsibility for Dudley Council Plus earlier in the financial year) and its workforce profile is set out in Table 1(a), showing breakdown by grade. This can be compared to the Council's profile as a whole which is set out in Table 1(b). The equivalent figures for 31 March 2007 and 2006 are set out in italics in tables 1(a) and (b). Due to the transfer of Dudley Council Plus to the Finance Directorate in December 2007, the figures for 31 March 2008 are not directly comparable with those for 2007 and 2006.
- 3.2 The figures show that the Finance Directorate has a higher proportion of BME employees than the Council as a whole. The proportion of employees with disabilities is also higher than the Council as a whole, the increase during the year being mainly due to employee data being updated on the personnel system. Whilst women represent approximately two thirds of the workforce, the proportion at senior grades is roughly half, and rising.

Table 1(a): Finance Directorate workforce profile 31/3/08 (compared with 31/3/07 and 31/3/06)

Finance		Female (%)	Male (%)	BME (%)	Disabled (%)
Scale point 34 and above (higher grades)	31/3/08	47.8	52.2	6.8	1.9
	<i>31/3/07</i>	<i>45.7</i>	<i>54.3</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>2.0</i>
	<i>31/3/06</i>	<i>42.5</i>	<i>57.5</i>	<i>6.9</i>	<i>1.4</i>
Below scale point 34 (lower grades)	31/3/08	70.6	29.4	7.6	3.0
	<i>31/3/07</i>	<i>67.2</i>	<i>32.8</i>	<i>6.9</i>	<i>1.9</i>
	<i>31/3/06</i>	<i>66.2</i>	<i>33.8</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>1.3</i>
Total	31/3/08	65.1	34.9	7.4	3.4
	<i>31/3/07</i>	<i>62.1</i>	<i>37.9</i>	<i>7.0</i>	<i>1.9</i>
	<i>31/3/06</i>	<i>60.5</i>	<i>39.5</i>	<i>7.2</i>	<i>1.3</i>

Table 1(b): Dudley MBC workforce profile 31/3/08 (compared with 31/3/07 and 31/3/06)

Dudley MBC		Female (%)	Male (%)	BME*	Disabled (%)
Scale point 34 and above (higher grades) (excluding schools) #	31/3/08	50.3	49.7	9.0	4.6
	31/3/07	49.6	50.4	8.9	4.3
	31/3/06	48.0	52.0	8.0	2.0
Below scale point 34 (lower grades) (excluding schools) #	31/3/08	69.5	30.5	6.2	2.6
	31/3/07	69.7	30.3	5.9	2.2
	31/3/06	69.3	30.7	5.2	1.3
Total (excluding schools)	31/3/08	66.6	33.4	6.6	2.9
	31/3/07	66.9	33.1	6.4	2.5
	31/3/06	66.4	33.6	5.6	1.4
Total (including schools)	31/3/08	74.9	25.1	5.5	2.0
	31/3/07	74.8	25.2	5.1	1.7
	31/3/06	74.6	25.4	4.6	0.8

Notes:

Scale point 34 on 31 March 2008 £28,000 approx – starting point of Principal Officer (POA) grade

* BME figures exclude those employees for whom no ethnic origin data is held

Grade breakdown excludes schools due to the different grading for teachers

Learning and Development

3.3 The Directorate has been recognised as an Investor in People (IIP), the last review being in November 2006 and the next review due in November 2009. At our last review (2006) the assessor noted the following key strengths, which we strive to maintain:

- Leadership values and behaviours form an integral part of the Performance Review and Development (PRD) process for managers and team leaders
- All employees offered learning and development opportunities in a way that is accessible to them regardless of working patterns or demands of the job
- Employees are positively encouraged to develop their knowledge and skills e.g. in gaining nationally recognised qualifications
- Induction to the job seen as valuable and effective, helping new employees integrate with, and therefore contribute to their team at an early stage.

3.4 During 2007/08 95% of staff had undertaken PRD meetings with their manager.

Employee Satisfaction

3.5 The Finance Directorate participated in the corporate employee survey in 2007. The survey results showed increased employee satisfaction compared with the previous survey in 2005. Responses to examples of relevant questions including whether or not employees felt they had been discriminated against (on the grounds of age, disability, ethnicity, gender or religion) were as follows:

Table 2: % of staff who “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with statements in the employee survey

Question	% who strongly agree / agree		
	2003	2005	2008
I am treated with respect by the people I work with	88.9	94.1	94.4
My line manager does not discriminate against me	n/a	97.9	99.1
I am not discriminated against by any member of my team	n/a	97.1	99.6

Recruitment

- 3.6 The directorate recruited 35 employees in 2007/08, the equality composition of which was as follows:

Table 3: Equality analysis of new starters for the year ended 31 March 2008 (compared with '07 and '06)

	Number	Male %	Female %	BME %
2007/08	35	23	77	11.4
2006/07	28	36	64	4.0
2005/06	54	37	63	5.6

Council-wide monitoring

- 3.7 Full data about employment across the Council, including that which meets the requirement for employment monitoring by racial group under race relations legislation, will be published in the Annual Review of Equality and Diversity 2008, which will be prepared by the Chief Executive’s Directorate for the Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education and the Cabinet in September. This annual report should therefore be read in conjunction with the Council wide review report.

4.0 Service Delivery

External accreditation

- 4.1 During 2007/08 the directorate strengthened its commitment to customer service by achieving Charter Mark accreditation for the directorate as a whole (previously the accreditation had been achieved by individual divisions on different dates).

Services provided

- 4.2 The Directorate delivers a wide range of services, both to the general public and other directorates. Through its service aims and performance management arrangements, the directorate ensures its customers receive a high quality, cost effective service, which is consistently exemplified in high customer satisfaction and positive independent review results.
- 4.3 Direct services to the public are provided by Benefit Services, Revenue Services and Dudley Council Plus. Brief details of these services are set out below:

Benefit Services

Provides an up to date, high quality, caring benefit service at a cost the public and the Council can afford, in a rapidly changing environment. Last year the service:

- dealt with over 13,000 new applications for Housing and Council Tax Benefit (H&CTB) and 26,000 notifications of changes in circumstances
- paid out over £86m of H&CTB to over 31,000 households
- undertook 1,500 home visits to claimants
- administered free school meals benefiting 8,100 children in the borough
- helped borough residents claim over £2.6m in additional welfare benefits and achieved over 1000 successful claims for Attendance Allowance and Income Support through the Benefits Shop.

During the year, Benefit Services also maintained the top score of 4 in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) review.

Revenue Services

Revenue Services achieves one of the best council tax collection rates among metropolitan councils, at a low cost. It offers customers a wide range of payment facilities, including electronic and telephone facilities. Last year the service:

- administered the billing, collection and recovery of 132,000 council tax and 10,000 business rates accounts
- provided different ways to pay including various electronic means which were used for 87,000 transactions
- provided council tax discounts and exemptions amounting to £12m.

Dudley Council Plus

Dudley Council Plus provides a single point of contact for customers contacting Dudley Council. It aims to make contacting the Council easier by providing information on, and access to all services in one place, through a variety of communication channels including personal visits, telephone calls, emails, internet electronic forms. Last year the service:

- responded to over 474,000 customer enquiries
- answered 76% of telephone calls within 30 seconds
- interviewed 93% of customers within 10 minutes of their arrival
- supported local and national charities through holding various events.

Support Services

4.4 The following divisions provide mainly support services to other parts of the Council:

Audit Services

Investigates and reviews internal controls and risk, ensuring the Council's resources are used in the most effective way.

Financial Services

Provides financial information, training, support and advice to managers and Council Members. This includes managing the Council's Revenue and Capital budgets and borrowings. It also administers the Council's payroll / pensions and risk management functions. Financial Services is recognised as an Investor in Excellence organisation (under the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) model).

Purchasing and Payment Services

Develops arrangements for purchasing goods and services and supports major projects and contracts within the Council. The service has been involved in developing corporate procurement guidelines that encompass equality principles.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Services

Helps the Council deliver best value by exploiting information and communication technology. The service supports the Council's data communication network and provides advice, guidance and training on ICT issues, particularly in the Council's adherence to the electronic government agenda. The use of new technology is a key element in ensuring that customer services are accessible.

4.5 Consultation

Customer consultation (including satisfaction surveys) takes place in all service areas. All divisions have key targets relating to customer satisfaction, whether for internal or external customers. During 2007/08, 93.39% of Benefit Services customers and 99.6% of Revenue Services customers stated that they were satisfied with the overall level of service. Customers who were not happy have been contacted and remedial action taken where appropriate. The data we have collected show that members of certain individual groups experience similar satisfaction levels to the community in general.

5.0 Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

5.1 During 2007/08, in accordance with the programme set out in the Council's Equality Scheme, the Directorate undertook Level 1 EIAs of both Benefit and Revenue Services. The outcomes of the assessments were as follows:

Benefit Services

- Continue to develop the Benefits Take-up strategy including recording activities in an annual report
- Continue to develop knowledge of the local community and service users
- Continue to ensure that all front line service providers are trained in equality awareness skills so they can meet the needs of individual customers

Revenue Services

- Continue to ensure that all front line service providers are trained in equality awareness skills so they can meet the needs of individual customers.

Action relating to these assessments have been included in the Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2008/09.

5.2 Following the transfer of the Dudley Council Plus service to the Finance Directorate, the EIA originally planned for 2007/08 will now be undertaken during 2008/09.

6.0 Achievement against the Directorate's Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2007/08

6.1 A schedule detailing the progress in achieving the Action Plan for Corporate and Directorate targets is included in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1 - Achievement of targets set for 2007/08

Progress in achieving the Corporate Targets (C) and the Directorate Targets (F)

No.	Objective and Lead Officer Detailed Action / target	Target Date / Milestones	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
C1	Develop clearer targets and outcomes (Equality Scheme)			
C1.1	Implement the new approach to equality impact assessments (EIAs) within the directorate using the agreed guidelines for undertaking these assessments <i>M Flavell, Corporate Finance</i>	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New approach established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieved
C1.2	Undertake full EIAs of the following services: Benefit Services Revenue Services <i>M Williams, Assistant Director (Revenues, Benefits and Mangement Support) / M Flavell</i>	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All planned EIAs undertaken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of Benefit and Revenue Services undertaken and key issues identified and reflected in the Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2008/09
C1.3	Work with the corporate Equality and Diversity Advisory group to review the approach to EIAs <i>M Flavell, Corporate Finance</i>	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate work supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing process
C1.4	Support corporate personnel in entering employee personal data onto the new personnel system <i>D Cook, Assistant Director (ICT and Business Transformation)</i>	July 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data input completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process completed

No.	Objective and Lead Officer Detailed Action / target	Target Date / Milestones	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
F1 F1.1	<p>Contribute to reducing poverty and social exclusion in the borough <i>M Williams, Assistant Director (Revenues, Benefits and Mangement Support)</i></p> <p>Maximise social security benefit take-up (Attendance Allowance and Income Support) by priority groups</p>	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve target of 960 successful new claims • Achieve target of £2.55m in additional benefits claimed through Benefits Shop work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,037 AA / IS claims achieved • £2.61m additional benefits gained
F1.2	Promote take-up of housing and council tax benefit through the provisions of the Benefit Take-up Strategy	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication and promotion of strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy published and presented to various groups including Benefits Customer Focus group, Older People's conference, Age Concern event, residents and tenants associations. Also specific customers targeted through Department and Work and Pensions; participated in corporate BME consultation event in November 2007, with positive feedback from attendees
F1.3	Maximise take-up of Council Tax and business rate relief through customer information	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers advised of reliefs and discounts and told how to claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information included with 2007/08 bills

No.	Objective and Lead Officer Detailed Action / target	Target Date / Milestones	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
F2	Improve customer access to services <i>M Williams, Assistant Director (Revenues, Benefits and Mangement Support)</i>			
F2.1	Maintain and improve customer satisfaction levels in Benefit and Revenue Services	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to achieve customer satisfaction targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits 93.39% (target 90%) • Revenues 99.6% (target 100%) • No significant variations between different equality groups
F2.2	Maintain the Charter Mark accreditation within the directorate as part of the annual review process	Dec 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The directorate is re-accredited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved in November 2007
F2.3	Provide choice of customer access facilities to meet individual needs	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer choice e.g. in how to claim benefits, how to pay bills etc. is provided, providing service based on individual need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing process, e.g. electronic payment facilities provided. Currently over 66,500 pay by direct debit (target 65,250) • 1500 benefit customers received home visits • Fast track process introduced for benefit claims
F2.4	Make links with the Older People Strategy	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy reflects the work of the Finance Directorate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directorate entries in the Older People Strategy updated for 2007/08. Benefits Shop has played a significant role in improving services for older people through its campaign work
F2.5	Work with Dudley Council Plus to identify areas where it can help achieve service improvements	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New service lines, choice of services provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New service line introduced (Housing non repairs calls) and consideration being given to others

No.	Objective and Lead Officer Detailed Action / target	Target Date / Milestones	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
F3	Manage staffing resources fairly and equally <i>Divisional heads / M Flavell</i>			
F3.1	Provide employee training in equality awareness	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training needs are identified through the Performance Review and Development (PRD) process and addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality and Diversity Training is available for all staff who require it, from the Central Learning and Development (CL&D) course programme • Equality competencies produced by the Finance directorate have been used for mapping against the CL&D courses • E-learning solutions to Equality and Diversity training are being investigated
F3.2	Provide managers with training in the Council's leadership values and behaviours	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training needs are identified through the Performance Review and Development (PRD) process and addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance DMT has promoted the corporate Management Development Centres to its middle and senior managers • Revenue Services has undertaken management workshops for its middle managers
F3.3	Ensure all employees participate in the PRD process and are given access to the training they need to do their jobs	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRDs undertaken for the majority of employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRDs undertaken for 95% of employees (excludes those away from work long term and recent starters)
F3.4	Measure employee satisfaction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved employee survey scores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate employee survey 2007 showed improved staff satisfaction compared with 2005 survey and extremely low instance of perceived discrimination. Areas of dissatisfaction have been addressed at a divisional level

No.	Objective and Lead Officer Detailed Action / target	Target Date / Milestones	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
F3.5	Communicate with employees about equality issues	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular communication and information provided about equality and diversity issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles on topics such as age discrimination and other new equality legislation, as well as employee benefits such as the childcare vouchers scheme, have been published in the quarterly employee newsletter
F3.6	Monitor workforce composition to identify any changes following the corporate employee personal data audit undertaken in January 2007	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring exercise undertaken and managers made aware of the results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance DMT receive quarterly report on workforce composition and have noted changes so they are able to respond to the needs of employees
F4	Promote equality through effective use of ICT resources <i>D Cook, Assistant Directorate (ICT and Business Transformation)</i>			
F4.1	Support the Council in achieving the government's agenda for service transformation where services are designed around the citizen or business - exploit new technology to provide improved access to council services (e.g. more on line services will benefit people with mobility problems)	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICT support provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directorate Business Transformation Team established to investigate new ways of working ICT facilities provided include various technological features adaptable to individual needs, e.g. keyboards, screens, mouse. Internet site has Bobby standard (improved accessibility for visually impaired people); customer facilities include highlighted text to spoken voice conversion – this is an area of continuous improvement as technology develops
F4.2	Improve systems integration to provide front line staff (including Dudley Council Plus) and citizens with better quality information	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICT support provided to Dudley Council Plus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Finance Directorate took over the running of Dudley Council Plus in December 2007 and is continuing with the programme to provide a single

No.	Objective and Lead Officer Detailed Action / target	Target Date / Milestones	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
				consistent citizen interface for as many services as possible as part of the government challenge to transform local services. To date the Housing (non repairs) service has been successfully transferred to Dudley Council Plus
F4.3	Develop capability to communicate pro-actively with citizens information that reflects their interests / needs	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT support provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some basic customer information is provided on the Council's website and development work is taking place, however our vision of a "citizens' portal" is still some way in the future
F4.4	Integrate systems to support development of ICT solutions based on life episodes	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT support provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above.
F4.5	Exploit ICT to allow services and information to be accessed from a variety of locations including citizens' homes and allow employees to work flexibly where appropriate	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT support provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business transformation team / ICT Services have carried out a feasibility study on working from home and this is currently being piloted
F4.6	Improve employee access to information through the development of publishing capabilities on the Intranet (improved access standards)	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT support provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparatory work on rolling out the web content management system to the Intranet has been undertaken with a view to introducing a pilot in June 2008
F4.7	Support the development of an e-learning facility for the Council (ensuring employee competencies in areas such as equality and diversity are achieved)	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT support provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT Services is currently working with Central Personnel to evaluate an e-learning package that could be used to support a range of e-learning initiatives including Equality and Diversity training
F5	Promote equality through procurement	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing and Payment Services has

No.	Objective and Lead Officer Detailed Action / target	Target Date / Milestones	Planned Outcomes / Performance Indicators	Progress / final outcome
F5.1	<p><i>I Clarke, Head of Purchasing and Payment Services</i></p> <p>Support corporate work in improving awareness of equality issues in procurement</p>		provided	contributed to corporate guidelines on promoting equality through the Council's procurement activity – this is published on the Council's Intranet site. Work continues in conjunction with the Procurement Steering Group to promote equality
F5.2	All tender documents to include mandatory clauses covering equal opportunities, race relations and human rights issues	March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tender documents conform to legal and operational requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant clauses are included in standard tender documents