

Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement

Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2008/09

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Annual Report is produced in accordance with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and reports on progress with implementing the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement's Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2008/09. The directorate's action plan for 2009/10 was considered by the Select Committee on Environment on 5th March 2009 and subsequently approved by the Cabinet Member for Finance.
- 1.2 The annual report covers the period from April 2008 to March 2009 and contains the following:
- Key facts about the directorate, including a workforce profile
 - Issues from equality impact assessments
 - Achievements against the directorate's Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2008/09

2.0 Key Facts about the Finance Directorate

- 2.1 The Finance Directorate's aim is to ensure the most effective use of the Council's financial resources by:
- Serving its customers well (we hold a directorate-wide Charter Mark)
 - 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 provides services direct to the public through 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. In 2008/09 the service maintained the top score of 4 in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) review. It also:

- Administered £95m in Housing and Council Tax Benefit to over 32,000 households
- Dealt with 17,000 new applications for Housing and Council Tax Benefit (H&CTB) and 74,000 notifications of changes in circumstances
- undertook over 2,200 home visits to benefit claimants

- administered free school meals benefiting 8,100 children in the borough
- through The Benefits Shop, helped borough residents claim £2.4m in additional welfare benefits and make over 1000 successful claims for Attendance Allowance and Income Support.

Revenue Services collects council tax, business rates and sundry debt. It offers customers a wide range of payment facilities, including electronic and telephone facilities. Last year the service:

- achieved the second highest council tax collection rate among metropolitan councils, at a low cost
- administered the billing, collection and recovery of nearly 133,000 council tax and 10,000 business rate accounts
- provided a payments service which processed approx. 115,000 cash and cheque payments
- received direct debit payments from around 60% of council taxpayers and 46% of business ratepayers
- managed the administration and reconciliation of 85,000 telephone and 30,000 internet payments

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 and electronic internet forms. Last year the service:

- responded to over 500,000 customer enquiries
- interviewed 88% of customers within 10 minutes of their arrival
- enabled 94% of customers to make cash payments within 10 minutes
- resolved over 88,000 customer requests for information
- supported local and national charities through facilitating various campaigns and events

Customer consultation (e.g. through satisfaction surveys and focus groups) takes place in all service areas. During 2008/09, 96% of Benefit Services customers, 98% of Revenue Services customers and 94% of Dudley Council Plus customers stated that they were satisfied with the overall level of service provided by the respective services. The data collected showed no apparent difference in satisfaction between the various equality groups.

2.3 The Directorate also provides support services to the Council as follows:

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.

Procurement, Contract Management and Creditor 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 communications 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.

- 2.4 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 Intranet, sets out the Directorate's objectives, priorities and targets for the year, including those for equality and diversity issues. 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.
- 2.5 Within the directorate, high priority is given to ensuring all employment practices, procurement activity, use of technology and service delivery comply with equality and diversity policies and current legislation. An Assistant Director 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.
- 2.6 In terms of its **workforce profile** as at 31st March 2009, the Finance Directorate employed 665 staff in 7 service areas. The 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 2008 and 2007 are set out in italics in tables 1(a) and (b).

Table 1(a): Finance Directorate workforce profile 31/3/09 (compared with 31/3/08 and 31/3/07)

Finance		Female (%)	Male (%)	BME (%)	Disabled (%)
Scale point 34 and above (Principal Officer grades)	31/3/09	49.7	50.3	5.3	2.4
	<i>31/3/08</i>	<i>47.8</i>	<i>52.2</i>	<i>6.8</i>	<i>1.9</i>
	<i>31/3/07</i>	<i>45.7</i>	<i>54.3</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>2.0</i>
Below scale point 34 (lower grades)	31/3/09	69.8	30.2	7.5	3.2
	<i>31/3/08</i>	<i>70.6</i>	<i>29.4</i>	<i>7.6</i>	<i>3.0</i>
	<i>31/3/07</i>	<i>67.2</i>	<i>32.8</i>	<i>6.9</i>	<i>1.9</i>
Total	31/3/09	64.7	35.3	6.9	3.2
	<i>31/3/08</i>	<i>65.1</i>	<i>34.9</i>	<i>7.4</i>	<i>3.4</i>
	<i>31/3/07</i>	<i>62.1</i>	<i>37.9</i>	<i>7.0</i>	<i>1.9</i>

Table 1(b): Dudley MBC workforce profile 31/3/09 (compared with 31/3/08 and 31/3/07)

Dudley MBC		Female (%)	Male (%)	BME* (%)	Disabled (%)
Scale point 34 and above (Principal Officer grades) (excluding schools) #	31/3/09	51.1	48.9	9.2	4.5
	31/3/08	50.3	49.7	9.0	4.6
	31/3/07	49.6	50.4	8.9	4.3
Below scale point 34 (lower grades) (excluding schools) #	31/3/09	69.3	30.7	6.3	2.6
	31/3/08	69.5	30.5	6.2	2.6
	31/3/07	69.7	30.3	5.9	2.2
Total (excluding schools)	31/3/09	66.5	33.5	6.8	2.9
	31/3/08	66.6	33.4	6.6	2.9
	31/3/07	66.9	33.1	6.4	2.5
Total (including schools)	31/3/09	75.0	25.0	5.6	1.8
	31/3/08	74.9	25.1	5.5	2.0
	31/3/07	74.8	25.2	5.1	1.7

Notes: Scale point 34 on 31 March 2009 £28,500 approx.

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

Grade breakdown excludes schools due to the different grading for teachers

- 2.7 The figures show that the Finance Directorate has a similar profile in relation to percentage of BME employees compared with the Council as a whole, however there is a lower percentage at SCP 34 and above. The percentage of employees with disabilities is slightly higher than that of the Council as a whole, but lower at SCP 34 and above. Whilst women represent approximately two thirds of the workforce, the proportion at senior grades is roughly half, and rising.

Recruitment

- 2.8 Table 2 sets out the Directorate's recruitment analysis for 2008/09 compared with the previous two years.

Table 2: Finance Directorate – recruitment activity.

	Number	Male %	Female %	BME %
2008/09	51	49	51	9.8
2007/08	35	23	77	11.4
2006/07	28	36	64	4.0

Learning and Development

- 2.9 The Directorate has been recognised as an Investor in People (IIP), the last review being in November 2006 and the next review due later in 2009. During 2008/09 98% of employees underwent annual Performance Review and Development (PRD) meetings with their manager, and agreed action plans for future work and development.
- 2.10 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 Council's Annual Review of Equality and Diversity 2009.

3.0 Equality Impact Assessments

- 3.1 An equality impact assessment (EIA) is a systematic and thorough approach to assessing the effects that the Council's policies or services have, or are likely to have, on different groups or communities. These usually relate to age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. EIAs respond to the requirements of equality legislation and therefore need to be carried out by all public authorities.
- 3.2 During 2008/09, in accordance with the programme set out in the Council's Equality Scheme, the Directorate undertook Level 1 EIAs of:
- Dudley Council Plus
 - Audit Services
 - Procurement, Contract Management and Creditor Services

Action relating to these assessments have been included in the Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2009/10. A summary of the issues in the areas looked at is set out below:

Dudley Council Plus

- a) Staff knowledge of equality issues should be maintained through training provided by the Council's Central Learning and Development team.
- b) The Centre will continue to liaise with organisations such as Action for Disabled People and Carers to ensure that services / access meet customer requirements.

Audit Services

- a) Staff undertaking audit work need to be fully aware of the Council's equality policies and procedures particularly where these impact on the areas being audited.

Procurement, Contract Management and Creditor Services

- a) Ensure staff awareness of equality policies and principles in the area of procurement is maintained.

6.0 Achievements against the Directorate's Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2008/09

- 6.1 The achievements against each of the targets set in the directorate's equality and diversity action plan for 2008/09 are set out in the Appendix.

Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement
June 2009

Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement – Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2008/09

Appendix

Objective (and lead officer)	Detailed action / target	Target date / milestones	Planned outcome / performance indicator	Progress / final outcome
<p>Priority 1 Undertake planned equality impact assessments (EIA) S Beckett L Bradshaw I Clarke</p>	<p>Objective 1.1 Complete EIAs in the following areas: - Dudley Council Plus - Audit Services - Procurement, Contract Management and Creditor Services</p>	<p>March 2009</p>	<p>EIAs completed within the timescales and improvement actions identified and scheduled.</p>	<p>All completed and identified actions included in 2009/10 equality and diversity action plan and divisional business plans.</p>
<p>Priority 2 Contribute to reducing poverty and social exclusion in the borough MN Williams (Assistant Director – Revenues, Benefits and Mangement Support)</p>	<p>Objective 2.1 Maximise social security take-up by priority groups through Attendance Allowance (AA) and Income Support (IS) campaign work.</p>	<p>March 2009</p>	<p>Benefit shop take-up targets and no. of successful new AA and IS claims achieved.</p>	<p>Benefits take-up achieved £2.38m (target £2.55m) and AA / IS campaign achieved 1016 (target 1000).</p>
	<p>Objective 2.2 Develop our knowledge of the local community and service users to ensure that the service is accessible and responsive and people get the benefits to which they are entitled (action emerging from 2007 equality impact assessment of Benefit Services and 2009 CAA requirements).</p>	<p>March 2009 (and continuing to March 2010)</p>	<p>Improved knowledge of existing customer base, which will allow us to determine appropriate strategies for improved benefit take-up by various groups.</p>	<p>Work undertaken by Benefit Services (with technical support from other Council ICT and Research teams) to identify areas of deprivation. Using “Mosaic” software a number of potential claimants (age 70+) identified and Benefit Services is planning to run a pilot benefits take-up campaign with a sample from this group.</p>

Objective (and lead officer)	Detailed action / target	Target date / milestones	Planned outcome / performance indicator	Progress / final outcome
	Objective 2.3 Maximise take-up of Council Tax and Business Rate reliefs / discounts through promoting customer awareness.	March 2009	Customer awareness initiatives undertaken. Financial value of council tax and business rate reliefs / discounts allowed during the year.	Reminder sent with 2008/09 bills. Over £10m in council tax discount occupancy relief granted.
Priority 3 Improve customer access to services MN Williams	Objective 3.1 Maintain and improve customer satisfaction levels.	March 2009	Improved customer satisfaction levels with front line services (regardless of equality category). Charter Mark accreditation maintained.	Benefit Services 96% (87%) Revenue Services 98% (99.6%) Dudley Council Plus 94% (n/a) (previous year scores in brackets) with no apparent difference in satisfaction between the various equality groups
MN Williams / M Flavell	Objective 3.2 Provide input into and support corporate strategies on vulnerable groups e.g. older people, children in care, carers.	March 2009	Finance directorate services fully reflected in and able to respond to these corporate strategies; Finance representation at officer working groups.	The directorate contributed to corporate policy and activity in the areas indicated.
	Objective 3.3 Consider alternative solution for communicating with customers who have a hearing impairment.	March 2009	Improved facilities for customers who have a hearing impairment.	Dudley Council Plus is currently investigating the suitability of a new product - Text Relay Service (previously TypeTalk).

Objective (and lead officer)	Detailed action / target	Target date / milestones	Planned outcome / performance indicator	Progress / final outcome
Priority 4 Manage staffing resources fairly and equally All divisional heads	Objective 4.1 Ensure all employees participate in the Performance Review and Development (PRD) process and have a training plan.	March 2009	% of employees who take part in the PRD process. % of employees who are satisfied with the PRD process. All by equality monitoring category.	98% of PRDs were undertaken and individual action plans agreed.
	Objective 4.2 Ensure managers and employees receive appropriate learning and development opportunities in equality awareness.	March 2009	Training needs identified e.g. through PRDs are promptly addressed through relevant training provision.	Ongoing – training needs identified at induction and through the PRD process and addressed through corporate training courses.
	Objective 4.3 Ensure managers are aware of / receive training in the Council’s leadership and behaviours.	March 2009	Training needs identified e.g. through PRDs are promptly addressed through relevant training provision.	Managers are encouraged to develop their skills through the various courses on offer through Central Learning and Development
	Objective 4.4 Monitor workforce composition to identify currently levels and enable managers to make decisions about future targets.	March 2009	% by ethnic origin % by gender % disabled % shortlisted and recruited by the above categories	Workforce data is monitored and reported to Finance DMT every quarter as part of the performance management process. See para. 2.6, Table 1(a) for 31/3/09 data.

Objective (and lead officer)	Detailed action / target	Target date / milestones	Planned outcome / performance indicator	Progress / final outcome
D Cook (AD – ICT and Business Transformation)	<p>Objective 5.1 Exploit new technology to provide improved access to council services.</p>	March 2009 (and continuing to March 2010)	Increased use of electronic service delivery; no. of customers who pay by direct debit, telephone etc.	Service access channels include: Internet; digi-tv; automated self service telephony; direct debit; telephone and internet card payments – use of which is increasing. The use of mobile working can provide face to face service in customers' own homes.
	<p>Objective 5.2 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.</p>	March 2009 (and continuing to March 2010)	Increased use of ICT systems; No. using council website to access services, apply for jobs etc.	Systems allow employees to work from a variety of locations including from home (e.g. Benefits Home Based Working) or to provide services from customers' homes. The Internet provides various electronic services that customers and job applicants can access from home
	<p>Objective 5.3 Improve employee access to information through the development of publishing capabilities on the Intranet (improved access standards).</p>	March 2009	Intranet web content management system successfully implemented; improved access for employees with certain disabilities.	Work on new corporate intranet (led by Chief Executive's Directorate) has commenced and will continue during 2009/10.

Objective (and lead officer)	Detailed action / target	Target date / milestones	Planned outcome / performance indicator	Progress / final outcome
M N Williams	Objective 5.4 Support the development of an e-learning facility for the Council (led by Chief Executive's Directorate as part of corporate Learning and Development Review)	March 2009 (and continuing to March 2010)	Intranet e-learning facility implemented; to include facility for equality and diversity training; ability to monitor training records and improve competencies.	Some work undertaken to scope what is required from an e-learning package and this work will continue in 2009/10. Audit Services has developed an online training facility for Financial Regulations.
	Objective 5.5 Pilot a Home Working initiative with benefit assessors and roll out further if successful.	March 2009	Successful pilot achieved and policy implemented; improved work life balance for employees who participate.	The Working from Home pilot has been very successful, providing benefits including improved productivity and job satisfaction, lower sickness absence and reduced travelling time. Being extended in 2009/10.
Priority 6 Promote equality through the procurement process I Clarke	Objective 6.1 Support corporate work in improving awareness of equality issues in procurement.	March 2009	Council officers involved in contracts are adhering to the corporate guidelines re. promoting equality through procurement.	The Corporate Procurement Strategy includes specific guidance on promoting equality through the Council's procurement activity, which is available on the Intranet. The Strategy is currently being updated and the new version will reflect the provisions of the Equality Bill.