



women  
in local  
councils

*making a difference*

# **GENDER ACTION PLAN FOR COUNCILS**

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# Gender Action Plan

## Introduction

----- Council is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity for elected members and officers of the Council.

In line with this commitment and in support of the 'Women in Local Councils' initiative, ----- Council has developed a Gender Action Plan. The Plan provides a framework to consider the key issues in respect of sex equality and complements the Council's Equality Scheme under S75 NI Act.

The Council wishes to address any gender under-representation and identify barriers which may exist. We are keen to encourage more integration of men and women into non-traditional roles and ensure equality of opportunity in terms of access to all levels of employment/leadership, training and in relation to promotional opportunities. The Council specifically wishes to address ....*[For example, the low proportion of women applying for employment with the Council in respect of senior management vacancies and the low levels of women as elected members.]*

----- Council will review the plan regularly with the support of the Local Government Staff Commission, The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and The Institute of Governance at Queen University, Belfast (DemocraShe). The first review will take place by 30 April 2007 and annually thereafter.

----- Council will provide the appropriate resources to ensure the effective implementation of the plan. Identified targets will be incorporated into the annual business plan and progress will be reviewed by Senior Management and Council on a regular basis.

**The aims of the action plans are:**

1. To ensure that the Council's policies and practices meet legal requirements.
2. To aim to promote best practice in relation to sex equality.
3. To address gender under-representations and job segregation by;
  - Promoting sex equality
  - Developing and implementing strategies to identify and remove barriers

The following action plans summarise the key actions adopted by the Council in pursuit of this strategy for both elected representatives and officers of the Council.

## Gender Action Plan Elected Members

ACTION	INDICATORS
Organisational Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council adoption of Declaration of Principles on Gender Equality.</li> <li>• Secure sign-up to Declaration of Principles by Council Committees.</li> </ul>
Organisational Stock-taking and Goal Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish facts and figures on women politicians' participation throughout Council.</li> <li>• Survey attitudes and identify barriers.</li> <li>• Consult within Council.</li> <li>• Set goals and timetables.</li> </ul>
Policies, Procedures and Action Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove barriers/establish opportunity in Council standing orders and rules.</li> <li>• Agree policies, practices and procedures to enhance women politicians' participation that include equal opportunities, harassment and conduct of debate.</li> <li>• Establish complaints and appeals procedures.</li> <li>• Agree action plans that will deliver results.</li> <li>• Establish monitoring systems to assess application of procedures <i>and</i> results.</li> <li>• Set up council committee to manage, monitor and propose policy/practice adjustments to improve results; this committee should also oversee the Council's gender employment action plan.</li> </ul>

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>INDICATORS</b>
Implementation and Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reorganise patterns of business and timings of meetings to facilitate family friendly arrangements and work/life balance.</li> <li>• Introduce family and caring support for meetings and office-holders as needed.</li> <li>• Examine best practice gender equality models elsewhere.</li> <li>• Develop good practice exchange and learning within Council.</li> <li>• Establish regular progress reporting on action plans.</li> <li>• Undertake progress monitoring and review at Council.</li> </ul>
Recruitment, Nomination and Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review nomination processes for Council office-holders and committees.</li> <li>• Review selection procedures for Council nominees and delegations.</li> <li>• Keep under regular review the composition of Council delegations and representation on public and other bodies.</li> </ul>
Internal and External Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate leadership and commitment to gender equality in articulation of Council's corporate aims and culture.</li> <li>• Publish Declaration of Principles on website and replicate in Council materials.</li> <li>• Underpin commitment by regular restatement at Council meetings and to the public.</li> <li>• Ensure regular briefings on progress on action plans and update members on new ideas.</li> <li>• Build upon external links to involve women and further promote the gender action plan.</li> </ul>

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>INDICATORS</b>
Training and Development Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Council training and development strategy from gender perspective.</li> <li>• Undertake equality awareness training and build Council capacity to fulfil plan.</li> <li>• Build Council capacity on new debating techniques.</li> <li>• Introduce targeted training and mentoring/shadowing to encourage participation.</li> <li>• Examine best practice models elsewhere.</li> <li>• Develop good practice exchange and learning within party.</li> <li>• Establish a gender equality network within the Council for support and learning.</li> </ul>
Evaluation and Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor and regularly review implementation of action plan, including analysis of statistical monitoring and consultation on progress.</li> <li>• Incorporate gender equality reviews into wider Council reviews.</li> <li>• Review progress against goals and targets and provide rationale for results.</li> <li>• Refocus action plan to improve results as necessary.</li> </ul>

## Gender Action Plan Officers

Organisational Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commit to and Promote Declaration of Principles on Gender Equality</li> <li>• Establish and support Gender Champion role</li> <li>• Establish internal Gender Steering Group</li> <li>• Develop Gender Action Plan</li> <li>• Integrate Gender Plan into Corporate aims and culture.</li> </ul>
Organisational Stock-taking and Goal Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor gender representation in employment including employees, applicants, appointees, promotees, leavers and contact workers.</li> <li>• Identify barriers within the workplace.</li> <li>• Monitor the effectiveness of policies and procedures designed to promote access to the workplace.</li> <li>• Set goals and timetables.</li> </ul>
Policies, Procedures and Action Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review organisations Equal Opportunities and Harassment Policies and Procedures from a gender perspective with particular attention to new and impending legislative changes.</li> <li>• Review all employment policies from a gender perspective.</li> <li>• Agree action plans that will deliver gender equality results.</li> <li>• Establish monitoring systems to assess application of procedures <i>and</i> results.</li> <li>• Set up staff committee to manage, monitor and propose policy/practice adjustments to improve results.</li> <li>• Report to Council committee on progress.</li> </ul>

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>INDICATORS</b>
Implementation and Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and further develop flexible working arrangements in line with legislative requirements and best practice.</li> <li>• Implement a systematic and objective procedure for considering flexible working requests.</li> <li>• Consider family and caring support for employees.</li> <li>• Examine best practice gender equality models elsewhere.</li> <li>• Develop good practice exchange and learning within Council.</li> <li>• Establish regular progress reporting on action plans.</li> <li>• Undertake progress monitoring and review at Council.</li> </ul>
Recruitment, Nomination and Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review recruitment and selection policy and procedures and consider adoption of appropriate positive action measures under Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended).</li> </ul>
Internal and External Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate leadership and commitment to gender equality in articulation of Council's corporate aims and culture.</li> <li>• Publish Declaration of Principles on website and replicate in Council materials.</li> <li>• Underpin commitment by regular restatement at Council meetings and to the public.</li> <li>• Ensure regular briefings on progress on action plans and update staff on new developments.</li> <li>• Build upon external links to further promote the gender action plan.</li> </ul>

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>INDICATORS</b>
Training and Development Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Council training and development strategy from gender perspective.</li> <li>• Undertake equality awareness training and build Officer capacity to fulfil plan.</li> <li>• Introduce targeted training and mentoring/shadowing to encourage development.</li> <li>• Examine best practice models elsewhere.</li> <li>• Establish a gender equality network within the Council for support and learning.</li> </ul>
Evaluation and Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor and regularly review implementation of action plan, including analysis of statistical monitoring and consultation on progress.</li> <li>• Incorporate gender equality reviews into wider Council reviews.</li> <li>• Review progress against goals and targets and provide rationale for results.</li> <li>• Refocus action plan to improve results as necessary.</li> </ul>