



Gender Action Plan Sub-Indicators

Contents

	Page No.
Organisational Commitment	1
Organisational Stock-Taking and Goal Setting	3
Policies, Procedures and Action Plans	4
Implementation and Monitoring	11
Recruitment, Nomination and Selection	13
Internal and External Communication	16
Training and Development Strategy	18
Evaluation and Review	19

Organisational Commitment

- **Commit to and promote the Declaration of Principles on gender equality**

Sub-Indicators

- The Declaration of Principles is communicated to all employees and displayed in a public place, for example on noticeboards, website.
- The Declaration of Principles is reviewed annually.
- Employee induction programmes include reference to the Council's commitment to gender equality.

- **Establish and support Gender Champion role**

Sub-Indicators

- One point of contact established within the organisation to co-ordinate and disseminate information.
- Gender Champion is supported in their role, for example, through relevant training, the provision of team briefing materials and/or mentoring support from senior managers.

- **Establish internal Gender Steering Group**

Sub-Indicators

- A Steering Group has been established to support the council's Gender Champion and to drive, coordinate and monitor progress in implementing both the elected member and officer sections of the Action Plan.
- The Steering Group is representative of stakeholders within the council, for example the Chief Executive or a Director; the Gender Champion; the HR Manager; trade union official and an Elected Member.

▪ **Develop Gender Action Plan**

Sub-Indicators

- An Action Plan has been developed which aims to:
 - ensure that policies and practices meet legal requirements
 - promote best practice
 - address gender under-representation and job segregation.
- The Action Plan is regularly monitored and reviewed by the Gender Steering Group.

▪ **Integrate Gender Plan into Corporate aims and culture.**

Sub-Indicators

- There is a link between gender equality and corporate aims, vision and values.
- Employees share the vision, aims and values and demonstrate them in their work.
- The organisation can demonstrate improved services in a way that can be linked directly to gender equality.
- Management review and report on statistical information in relation to gender equality.

Organisational Stock-Taking and Goal Setting

Indicators

Monitor gender representation in employment including employees, applicants, appointees, promotees, leavers and contact workers.

Identify barriers within the workplace.

Monitor the effectiveness of policies and procedures designed to promote access to the workplace.

Set goals and timetables.

Sub-Indicators

A gender review is undertaken on a regular basis.

Analysis of the information includes consideration as to whether, for example, there are particular job groups that are more likely to be filled by men and women, or whether part-time employees are concentrated in particular job-groups.

The review considers employment pattern, trends and practices.

Based on analysis of information consideration is given to positive action measures that would be appropriate

Gender equality questions are included in staff surveys.

Focus groups are held to identify barriers within the workplace.

Management review and report on statistical information in relation to gender at least annually.

Policies and procedures are monitored to ensure effective access to the workplace.

External benchmarking includes participation in a range of groups, for example Opportunity Now for joint activities and discussion.

Goals and timetables are reflected in the Gender Action Plan.

Policies, Procedures and Action Plans

Indicators

- **Review organisations Equal Opportunities and Harassment Policies and Procedures from a gender perspective with particular attention to new and impending legislative changes.**
- **Review all employment policies from a gender perspective.**
- **Agree action plans that will deliver gender equality results.**
- **Establish monitoring systems to assess application of procedures and results.**
- **Set up staff committee to manage, monitor and propose policy/practice adjustments to improve results.**
- **Report to Council committee on progress.**

Sub-Indicators

1. **Equal Opportunities and Harassment Policies and Procedures**
 - **Review against ECNI Equality Indicators (See Appendix 1)**
 - **Review against Gender Specific Indicators;**

Equal Opportunities Policy

- **Definitions of discrimination**
 - **Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations (NI) 2005.**
- **Clear statement of organisations commitment to equality for employees and job applicants irrespective of **gender, marital or family status****
 - **Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended)**
 - **Amendments to SDO**
 - **Civil Partnership Act 2004**
 - **Gender Recognition Act 2004.**

- Commitment to ensuring organisations policies and procedures reflect requirements of SDO (as amended) and Code of Practice.
- **Commitment to gender action plan** – overview of gender participation in the workforce and commitment to action plan.
- Commitment to gender and sex discrimination training.

Harassment Policy

- Review policy in light of Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations (NI) 2005 and amendments to definition of harassment/sexual harassment.
- Harassment Advisors designated to provide advice and assistance to employees subjected to sexual harassment and where possible, to assist in the resolution of problems.
- Training for managers and supervisors. Such training should identify the factors which contribute to a working environment free of sexual harassment and familiarise participants with their responsibilities under the company's policy.

2. Employment Policies Procedures and Practices

- **Review against ECNI Equality Indicators**
- **Review against Gender Specific Indicators**

Communications

- Regular briefings and updates for staff on:-
 - Flexible working policy and practices
 - Progress with gender action plan
 - Developmental opportunities.
- Development of a “**Stay in Touch**” scheme to ensure that employees who are on maternity leave or career break are notified of recruitment/promotion opportunities, training courses, organisational changes etc.
- Develop an internal gender/equal opportunities focus group.

Working Arrangements and Practices

- The Organisation recognises that effective practices to promote work life balance will benefit the organisation and its employees.
- It is a corporate objective of the employer that, as far as it is lawful and reasonably practicable, it will take positive steps to organise its working arrangements and practices so as to accommodate a reasonable balance between its own business needs and the personal needs of individual workers.
- There is a written policy on working arrangements and practices which contains:-
 - A statement of the employer's commitment to take positive steps, so far as it is lawful and reasonably practicable, to organise its working arrangements and practices so as to accommodate a reasonable balance between its own business needs and the personal needs of individual workers.
 - A description of the types of arrangements and adjustments which are within the scope of the policy; examples may include:-
 - flexibility with hours of work, including flexibility in starting and finishing times and availability of part-time working and job-sharing;
 - variation of workplace location, including the provision of home working.
 - Childcare Provision/Assistance for example:-
 - crèche facilities/nursery places/holiday play scheme
 - contribution to childcare costs
 - childcare vouchers
 - salary sacrifice
 - reserved childcare places.
 - A statement of the employer's commitment to give genuine, objective and prompt consideration to workers' requests for adjustments to their working arrangements.
 - A statement of the employer's commitment to treat such requests without discrimination on any of the statutory equality grounds.

- There is a systematic and objective procedure for considering requests by workers for adjustments to working arrangements or practices and for implementing the decisions which are made. This procedure reflects the employers' and employees' joint responsibility to discuss workable solutions and encourage partnership between individuals and their managers.
- Leadership from the top of the organisation to support work life balance strategy and encouragement of senior management to make use of work life balance policy.
- The operation of the policy is monitored and reviewed by the employer in the course of its wider equal opportunities monitoring and review practices.
- Domestic Violence Policy
 - Clear statement of organisation's recognition of the issue of domestic violence and its potential impact on employment.
 - Commitment to provide all possible support for any victim of domestic violence.
 - Commitment to provide free, independent, confidential counselling to any employee with guarantees of absolute confidentiality.
 - Commitment to provide suitable training for staff, particularly those who may be in a position to provide counselling and appropriate training for other staff, particularly managers.
 - Nominated trained person(s) to offer support, encouragement and guidance to the victim of domestic violence.
 - Provision for the granting of special paid leave where necessary.

Monitoring and Review

- Applications for all appointments should be monitored on the basis of sex, marital status and dependants.
- Success rates should be monitored at the short-listing and appointment states.
- The employer's policy on equal opportunities monitoring includes a commitment to analyse gender monitoring data and develop appropriate action plans.
- Conduct a staff survey to collate monitoring data and assess awareness and views on organisational policies and procedures on flexible working.
- Conduct periodic reviews of the gender balance in employment.
- Monitoring information should be used to develop appropriate positive action initiatives such as positive action advertising.
- Systems should be developed to monitor the effectiveness (requests and uptake) of policies and procedures designed to promote access to the workplace e.g. flexible working hours, dependants/carers leave etc.
- Monitor the rate of 'returners' following maternity leave.

Sickness Absence

- Pregnancy related absence is discounted when considering an employee's sickness absence in relation to the absence management policy.

Training and Development

- Sex equality and anti harassment training is provided to:-
 - All new staff members in the course of their induction training
 - All employees and managers regularly
 - All Council members.
- Recruitment and Selection training is provided for all staff involved in the selection process. This should include training on sex equality.

- All occupational and other training opportunities are advertised in a way that ensures, so far as is practicable, that the widest possible pool of potential applicants is given an opportunity to apply. This includes also notifying and inviting applications for training from members of staff who are absent from work due to illness, pregnancy or any other reason.
- The employer gives priority to providing appropriate occupational training to staff members who have returned from long-term disability-related or pregnancy-related absences, particularly where other staff members who were not absent did receive similar training opportunities.
- The employer conducts regular equality monitoring of the operation of its general practices regarding the provision of occupational and other training.

Termination of Employment

- Monitoring:

In accordance with its general equal opportunities monitoring policy, the employer monitors leavers and conducts exit interviews to record the reasons why workers chose to leave and to obtain their general views on the provision of equal opportunities in the workplace. This information is analysed regularly from a gender perspective.

- Redundancy:

Ensure that workers who are or were pregnant do not suffer disadvantages as a result of pregnancy-related matters that occurred during the terms of their pregnancies and/or during the periods of any ordinary or additional maternity leave connected with the pregnancies.

The redundancy selection criteria are applied consistently and fairly to all employees in the appropriate selection pool, subject to:-

- Ensuring that workers who are, or were, pregnant do not suffer disadvantages on the grounds of their pregnancies (for example, as a result of the impact of pregnancy-related matters that occurred during the terms of their pregnancies and/or during the periods of any ordinary or additional maternity leave connected with the pregnancies which the workers are taking or have taken (e.g. pregnancy-related sickness absences or maternity leave absences)).
- Offering any suitable alternative vacant post, where one exists, to any worker who is at that time taking ordinary or additional maternity leave where it would not be practicable by reason of redundancy for the employer to continue to employ her under her existing contract of employment.¹

During the selection process the employer examines the relative gender impact which the application of the selection criteria is having and considers whether the criteria, or a particular criterion (e.g. length of service), are justified where it appears that they may lead to one gender being put at a particular disadvantage.

¹ This is an obligation that is imposed on employers by Regulation 10 of the Maternity and Parental Leave, etc. Regulations (NI) 1999.

Implementation and Monitoring

- **Review and further develop flexible working arrangements in line with legislative requirements and best practice.**

Sub-Indicators

- List of flexible working options available to staff.
 - Record of uptake of options.
 - Person responsible for reviewing and updating arrangements.
 - Benchmarking against best practice organizations.
- **Implement a systematic and objective procedure for considering flexible working requests.**

Sub-Indicators

- Details of procedure should be clearly presented in a written document.
 - Role of Line Manager, Human Resource Manager etc to be defined.
 - Communication of procedure to relevant staff.
 - Record of requests granted and those refused, and reason for refusal recorded.
- **Consider family and caring support for employees.**

Sub-Indicators

- Record of number of employees with caring responsibilities.
 - Record of flexible working requests considered in relation to employees with caring responsibilities.
 - Provision of information to staff on caring support available in the organisation and in the wider community.
- **Examine best practice gender equality models elsewhere.**

Sub-Indicators

- Attend Opportunity Now best practice events.
- Copies of Opportunity Now case-studies.
- Network with other employers/organizations.

- **Develop good practice exchange and learning within Council.**

Sub-Indicators

- Key staff involved in equality/diversity committees.
- Good practice case-studies available.

- **Establish regular progress reporting on action plans.**

Sub-Indicators

- Progress report produced either separately or as part of wider organisational report.
- Level of reporting i.e. Board level.

Recruitment, Nomination and Selection

Indicators

- **Review recruitment and selection policy and procedures and consider adoption of appropriate positive action measures under Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (as amended).**
 - **Review against ECNI Equality Indicators (See Appendix 1)**
 - **Review against Gender Specific Indicators (sub-indicators);**

Sub-Indicators

Job Descriptions and Personnel Specifications.

- Ensure all conditions, requirements, criteria and practices are strictly justifiable in the context of the job e.g. conditions regarding age, mobility or length of service may indirectly discriminate against women.
- Consider alternatives to qualifications and/or work related experience including voluntary and community work, domestic caring responsibilities and managing a home.
- Any length of service requirement should be considered to ascertain if it is necessary for the post.

Information to Potential Applicants (Advertising/Applications).

- Provide information of facilities and services in local area.
- Wording should not be used which implies that the post may be most suitable for either men or women.
- Encourage applicants to indicate skills, expertise and abilities through voluntary work or in the home.
- Questions on marital status, dependents, age etc should only be asked as part of equal opportunities monitoring.
- Applicants should be assured that the monitoring information that they provide will form no part of the selection process and is confidential.

Shortlisting and Interviewing.

- Assumptions or stereotypes about applicants should not be allowed to influence the process e.g. generalisations such as “a woman/man wouldn’t be interested in this job” constitutes unlawful discriminatory behaviour.
- Be flexible with interview arrangements – consider domestic caring responsibilities. Provide a good estimate of how long the interview will last.
- Consider that the interviewee may be a “women returner” who may be nervous and out of practice in an interview situation.
- Consider the time of the interview and be aware that an interviewee may have domestic caring responsibilities to consider. Therefore, also provide a good estimate of how long the interview will last.
- Interview panels should have male and female members; if this is not possible from within, the organisation should consider bringing in a suitable outsider.

Other Recruitment Issues.

- Women ‘returners’ may be unable to provide the name of a recent employer. In such cases, if references are desired from schools or other referees, questions should be framed for the referee which will elicit comments on, for example, the individual’s organisational ability, interpersonal skills or other issues relevant to the job in question.

Positive Action.

- Include statement in job advertisements to encourage men/women to apply.
- Place job advertisements in specialist media.
- State in job advertisements the availability of flexible working arrangements.
- Offer pre-employment training.
- Provide interview skills training - through schools, community groups.
- Consider how work experience opportunities can be used to encourage men/women to work in the organisation.

- Provision of training programmes leading to employment upon successful completion.
- Sponsor community, sporting and youth events associated with particular under-represented group.
- Participate in careers events.
- Clearly communicate the gender strategy to all staff and regularly update staff.
- Develop an internal gender/EO focus group.
- Develop/build upon links with women's groups, community groups, job clubs, voluntary organisations and other agencies associated with under-represented group.
- Develop/build upon an external focus group.

Internal and External Communication

- **Demonstrate leadership and commitment to gender equality in articulation of Council's corporate aims and culture.**

Sub-Indicators

- There is a defined strategy/plan for internal communication that has defined gender targets and it has been implemented and reviewed.
- Managers are supported to communicate effectively through relevant training, provision of team briefing materials and/or mentoring support from senior managers.

- **Publish Declaration of Principles on website and replicate in Council materials.**

Sub-Indicators

- Declaration of Principles available on council's website.
- Displayed in public area.
- Circulated in staff newsletters
- Included as part of Induction process.

- **Underpin commitment by regular restatement at Council meetings and to the public.**

Sub-Indicator

- Evidence of reporting of progress at Council meetings and senior management team briefings.

- **Ensure regular briefings on progress on action plans and update staff on new developments.**

Sub-Indicators

- Communication on progress of the gender action plan as part of the organisational developmental plan.
- Regular staff/team briefings.
- One point of contact is established within the organisation to co-ordinate and disseminate information.

- **Build upon external links to further promote the gender action plan.**

Sub-Indicator

- Partnerships are developed with local groups and other statutory bodies to share best practice and promote gender equality.

Training and Development Strategy

- **Review Council training and development strategy from gender perspective.**

Sub-Indicator

- The Council's Training and Development Strategy has been reviewed to ensure that gender issues are mainstreamed.

- **Undertake equality awareness training and build Officer capacity to fulfil plan.**

Sub-Indicator

- A programme is in place to deliver equality awareness training to all employees.

- **Introduce targeted training and mentoring/shadowing to encourage development.**

Sub-Indicators

- An appropriate number of officers have been equipped to provide advice and assistance in implementing the plan.
- Targeted opportunities are available to women as an integral part of the Council's training and development provision.

- **Examine best practice models elsewhere.**

Sub-Indicator

- The Council benchmarks its policies and practices against models elsewhere.

- **Establish a gender equality network within the Council for support and learning.**

Sub-Indicator

- There is a formal network for addressing gender equality issues in training and development.

Evaluation and Review

- **Monitor and regularly review implementation of action plan, including analysis of statistical monitoring and consultation on progress.**

Sub-Indicators

- Person/s allocated responsibility for above.
- Details of process and timescale.
- Who will be consulted.

- **Incorporate gender equality reviews into wider Council reviews.**

Sub-Indicator

- Gender equality questions incorporated into wider Council reviews.

- **Review progress against goals and targets and provide rationale for results.**

Sub-Indicators

- Progress report.
- Who receives the progress report.

- **Refocus action plan to improve results as necessary.**

Sub-Indicator

- Updated action plan listing new targets, dates and accountabilities.