



GENDER EMPLOYMENT EQUALITY PLAN

Supporting



women
in local
councils

making a difference

The Women in Local Councils initiative is designed to develop and implement strategies to promote sex equality in the local government sector in Northern Ireland, with regard to both employment and political representation. The initiative is timely given the impending significant changes in the public sector and coincides with the 30th anniversary of sex equality legislation.

This strand of the initiative focuses on employment within the local government sector. The under representation of women at senior levels remains of concern. For example:

- there are no female Chief Executives in the 26 Councils
- women comprise only 18% of second tier officers in Councils
- among the 180 first and second tier posts, there are only 28 women comprising 16% over both levels
- In 46% of Councils, that is 12 out of 26, there are no women in the top two management tiers.¹

An Employment Equality Plan provides the foundation for a workplace culture of equality. This plan, focusing on the area of sex equality, provides an overview of the key employment issues to be considered and is designed to link to the Local Government Human Resource Standards Framework.²

The Plan is also designed to recognise the need to encourage more integration of both men and women into non-traditional jobs. Research with employers conducted by the WINS (Women In to Non Traditional Sectors) Project illustrates some of the clear problems being experienced with non-traditional employers in Northern Ireland:³

- Women make up less than 7% of the workforce in non-traditional sectors within the four major employers involved in the project
- Of these women working in non-traditional sectors, over one quarter are working in a part-time capacity compared to less than 2% of men
- Where information was available, the retention periods for women in non-traditional areas of the employer partners was much worse than for women in more traditional areas (35% worse on average).

The Equality Commission and Women's Development Steering Group welcomes the opportunity to work in partnership in the development and implementation of this initiative.



Evelyn Collins
Chief Executive
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland



Heather Loudon
Chair
Women's Development Steering Group

¹ Figures and research data from Heather Loudon's paper at the Roundtable on Women and the RPA, Queen's University Institute of Governance, 2 September 2005

² The Local Government Human Resource Standards Framework, developed in 2005, is an audit tool encompassing the areas of equality, employee relations and training and development.

³ McCabe, A (2005), Interim Research Report, Belfast: WINS.

ACTION	HUMAN RESOURCE STANDARDS FRAMEWORK
<p>ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT</p> <p>Develop and communicate a framework outlining the aims of the strategy as agreed by senior officers and political representatives.</p>	<p>Indicator 1 Corporate Aims and Culture</p> <p>Indicator 2 Internal Communications</p> <p>Indicator 3 Performance Management</p> <p>Indicator 4 HR Unit Performance/Capacity</p> <p>Indicator 7 Information, Consultation and Negotiation</p> <p>Indicator 8 Organisation Reviews</p> <p>Indicator 10 Commitment to Equality</p> <p>Indicator 11 Equal Working Environment</p> <p>Indicator 13 Equality of Access to HR services</p> <p>Indicator 14 Developing Strategies and Plans for Learning and Development</p>
<p>MONITORING</p> <p>Review and further develop systems to monitor the gender representation in employment including employees, applicants, appointees, promotees, leavers and contract workers in respect of gender.</p> <p>Develop systems to monitor the effectiveness of policies and procedures designed to promote access to the workforce.</p>	<p>Indicator 6 Implementation of policies and procedures</p> <p>Indicator 8 Organisation Reviews</p> <p>Indicator 10 Commitment to Equality</p> <p>Indicator 11 Equal Working Environment</p> <p>Indicator 13 Equality of Access to HR services</p> <p>Indicator 14 Developing Strategies and Plans for Learning and Development</p>

ACTION	HUMAN RESOURCE STANDARDS FRAMEWORK
<p>EMPLOYMENT POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES</p> <p>Review and develop all employment policies, practices and procedures from a gender perspective with particular attention to new and impending legislative changes.</p>	<p>Indicator 3 Performance Management</p> <p>Indicator 4 Human Resources Unit Performance/Capacity</p> <p>Indicator 5 Absence Management</p> <p>Indicator 6 Implementation of policies and procedures</p> <p>Indicator 7 Information, Consultation and Negotiation</p> <p>Indicator 9 Pay, Benefits and Conditions of Service</p> <p>Indicator 10 Commitment to Equality</p> <p>Indicator 11 Equal Working Environment</p> <p>Indicator 12 Recruitment and Selection</p> <p>Indicator 13 Equality of Access to HR services</p> <p>Indicator 14 Developing Strategies and Plans for Learning and Development</p> <p>Indicator 15 Implementing Learning and Development</p> <p>Indicator 16 Evaluating the Impact of Learning and Development</p>
<p>WORKING ARRANGEMENTS AND PRACTICES</p> <p>Review and further develop flexible working arrangements in line with legislative requirements and best practice recommendations.</p> <p>Develop and implement a systematic and objective procedure for considering requests for adjustments to working arrangements or practices and for implementing the decisions which are made.</p> <p>Review and further develop measures to promote access to the workplace</p>	<p>Indicator 1 Corporate Aims and Culture</p> <p>Indicator 7 Information, Consultation and Negotiation</p> <p>Indicator 8 Organisation Reviews</p> <p>Indicator 9 Pay, Benefits and Conditions of Service</p> <p>Indicator 10 Commitment to Equality</p> <p>Indicator 11 Equal Working Environment</p>

ACTION	HUMAN RESOURCE STANDARDS FRAMEWORK
<p>RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES</p> <p>Review Recruitment and Selection policy and procedure and consider adoption of appropriate positive action measures under Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 as amended).</p>	<p>Indicator 1 Corporate Aims and Culture</p> <p>Indicator 6 Implementation of policies, practices and procedures</p> <p>Indicator 10 Commitment to Equality</p> <p>Indicator 12 Recruitment and Selection</p> <p>Indicator 13 Equality of Access to HR services</p>
<p>INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION STRATEGY</p> <p>Conduct a staff survey, develop an internal focus group and forge links with representative groups, community groups and influential individuals, to identify possible reasons for and ways to address gender under-representations.</p> <p>Develop a strategy to address issues and problems identified.</p>	<p>Indicator 1 Corporate Aims and Culture</p> <p>Indicator 2 Internal Communications</p> <p>Indicator 7 Information, Consultation and Negotiation</p> <p>Indicator 10 Commitment to Equality</p> <p>Indicator 11 Equal Working Environment</p> <p>Indicator 13 Equality of Access to HR services</p>
<p>TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</p> <p>Review Training and Development Strategy from a gender perspective including staff training on equal opportunities and harassment.</p> <p>Consider barriers to training and development opportunities and develop programmes including mentoring and positive action training initiatives, where appropriate, to encourage participation.</p> <p>Ensure gender strategy is actively promoted through staff training events.</p>	<p>Indicator 1 Corporate Aims and Culture</p> <p>Indicator 3 Performance Management</p> <p>Indicator 10 Commitment to Equality</p> <p>Indicator 14 Developing Strategies and Plans for Learning and Development</p> <p>Indicator 15 Implementing Learning and Development</p> <p>Indicator 16 Evaluating the Impact of Learning and Development</p>

ACTION	HUMAN RESOURCE STANDARDS FRAMEWORK
<p>PAY</p> <p>Develop a policy on equal pay and conduct an equal pay audit.</p>	<p>Indicator 1 Corporate Aims and Culture</p> <p>Indicator 9 Pay, Benefits and Conditions of Service</p> <p>Indicator 10 Commitment to Equality</p>
<p>EVALUATION AND REVIEW</p> <p>Monitor and regularly review the implementation of the strategy and incorporate in the organisations wider equal opportunities monitoring and review practices.</p>	<p>Indicator 1 Corporate Aims and Culture</p> <p>Indicator 4 HR Unit Performance/Capacity</p> <p>Indicator 8 Organisation Reviews</p> <p>Indicator 10 Commitment to Equality</p> <p>Indicator 16 Evaluating the Impact of Learning and Development</p>
<p>BENCHMARKING</p> <p>Set goals and timetables as targets of expectation. Benchmark against best practice models.</p>	<p>Indicator 1 Corporate Aims and Culture</p> <p>Indicator 4 HR Unit Performance/Capacity</p> <p>Indicator 10 Commitment to Equality</p>

