

Gender Equality Scheme

April 2007



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Gender Equality Scheme

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Foreword

Welcome to Malvern Hills District Council's Gender Equality Scheme.

In recent years the Council has become more and more aware of the importance of reflecting equalities and diversity issues in the way in which we provide services and in our employment practices, and we have been working hard to move things forward.



The new Gender Equality Duty assists the Council in addressing gender issues and this Scheme sets out a structure for the actions we will be taking to implement that Duty.

As a community leader, provider of services and employer our aim is to treat everyone, whatever their gender, fairly recognising their different needs. An important part of taking this forward will be working in partnership with service users, groups representing men and women, and our employees.

As part of our work we will be gathering information about how men and women actually experience services on the ground, to improve the way we do things and ensure equality of outcomes.

For details of how you can help us or how you can obtain a copy of the document in an alternative format (for example, large print, braille or audio) or a different language, please see page 13.

We look forward to hearing from you.

 <p>Councillor Serena Croad Leader of the Council</p>	 <p>Chris Bocoock Chief Executive</p>
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1. Introduction

The Council welcomes the introduction of the Gender Equality Duty. The Gender Equality Scheme, introduced under that Duty, will form an important part of our approach to Equality and Diversity and sets out how we will deal with the issues facing men and women in our community.

Malvern Hills District Council is very committed to Equalities and Diversity, recognising that action on these issues benefits both the community and the Council itself as an organisation.

In 2004 the Council adopted a Corporate Equality Policy and also achieved Level 1 of the Equalities Standard for Local Government. In 2005 we were part of a programme run by the then local government Employers' Organisation known as 'Diversity in the Districts', which assisted us in progressing Equalities and Diversity in the organisation. A lot of work has taken place over the last two years and the Council has a target of achieving Level 2 of the Equalities Standard by June 2007.

The Council is also taking part in a County wide project, 'Tailoring our Equality and Diversity Strategy for Worcestershire'. It is expected that this project will, through the research which forms an important part of its work, help to inform and assist our work in taking forward Gender Equality.

2. What this Scheme is about - A Brief Outline

The Council has a statutory duty, from 6th April 2007, in carrying out its functions to promote equality of opportunity between men and women, and eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment.

This Scheme sets out how the Council will do this. In brief, the Council will:

- Consult with men and women, and groups representing them;
- Gather and analyse evidence in relation to gaps in service provision and our employment of men and women. To do this, as well as receiving information from representative groups and individuals, we will use focus groups, other channels of customer feedback and statistics (for instance in relation to the make up of our staff);
- Carry out Equalities Impact Assessments. We will work with men and women's groups to prioritise policies and service areas for assessment and involve them in the assessment, ensuring information gathered is fed into the process;
- As a result of the information gathered on issues (including from Equalities Impact Assessments) we will review our gender equality objectives and take action to remedy or reduce any identified adverse impacts or gaps between the satisfaction levels of men and women, including the extent to which their needs are met and barriers to service take up - focusing on effective change and outcomes and the efficient use of resources;

- Publish a report annually giving details of progress made against the Scheme's three year Action Plan, including the things we have done over the year to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

Additionally, through this process, and with training where appropriate, the Council expects to further develop its knowledge in gender equality issues.

We also aim, by our actions under the Scheme, to set an example to others in the community.

3. Council Vision, Objectives and Priorities

The Council recognises that having regard to Gender Equality issues is important in its work to achieve its vision, objectives and priorities. Being aware of the different needs of men and women will increase confidence in our ability to deliver our vision of:

A district which has first class services and facilities, is clean, safe, healthy and prosperous and has vibrant and active communities.

The Council's objectives are:

- Clean and green
- Safe, healthy and active
- Prosperity shared by all
- A connected district
- Affordable, decent housing
- First class services and facilities

The Council's Priorities for Improvement are as follows, and include issues which relate to the different needs of men and women:

- Local Homes for Local People
- Reducing our Impact on the Environment
- Supporting Children & Young People
- Improving our Streets, Parks and Open Spaces
- Rural Regeneration

Core principles underpinning everything the Council does are:

- A sustainable future
- Valuing diversity
- Accessibility
- Community Pride and citizenship
- Valuing and developing our employees
- Quality and Value
- Advocacy

4. Current Position on Equality and Diversity

The Council is working to the Equality Standard for Local Government, a framework designed to ensure that equality feeds into all aspects of policy, employment and service delivery. It has five levels:

Level 1 – Commitment to a Comprehensive Equality Policy

Level 2 – Assessment and Consultation/Participation

Level 3 – Setting equality objectives and targets

Level 4 – Information systems and monitoring against targets

Level 5 – Achieving and reviewing outcomes.

The Council achieved Level 1 in September 2004. We have a target of achieving Level 2 by June 2007.

Equality and diversity need to be built into our business planning processes and all our activities. The Vision, Objectives and Priorities for Improvement are reflected in the Council Plan and Service Management Plans which also include equality action planning and target setting. From these are developed individual employees' personal objectives, with progress reviewed at least annually.

Some services are provided by others on the Council's behalf and we are also a large purchaser of various goods. The Council seeks to ensure that organisations from which it obtains goods and services are taking a similar approach to Equalities and Diversity.

5. Sex and Gender Terms

The term 'sex' is used to describe biological difference between men and women.

The term 'gender' refers to the wider social roles and relationships which structure men's and women's lives. Gender inequality exists in all aspects of society and refers to lasting and embedded patterns of advantage and disadvantage.

(EOC, Statutory Code of Practice)

6. The Gender Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2006 amends the Sex Discrimination Act to place a statutory General Duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need:

- to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- to promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

The weight given to gender equality should, however, be proportionate to its relevance to a particular function. The greater the relevance of a function to gender equality, the greater regard should be paid to it.

As part of the duty, public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment in employment and vocational training for transsexual people.

The Act also imposes Specific Duties. To meet these, the Council will:

- Show how it will meet its duties and set out its gender equality objectives in this and future gender equality schemes;
- In formulating overall objectives, consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap;
- Gather and use information on how our policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in delivery of services whilst being particularly mindful of privacy concerns;
- Consult stakeholders (ie. employees, service users and others including trade unions) and take account of relevant information in order to determine our gender equality objectives and develop an understanding of the major gender equality issues in our functions (including barriers to service take up);

- Assess the impact of our current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality;
- Implement the actions set out in our scheme within 3 years, unless unreasonable or impracticable;
- Report against our scheme every year (outcomes achieved) and review the scheme at least every 3 years.

This will be achieved by consulting with the community and staff and groups representing men and women. In doing this, the Council will:

- report progress publicly,
- set an example to others,
- build staff knowledge in gender equality issues and initiatives, and
- focus on effective change or outcomes, and efficient use of resources.

7. Developing Gender Equality

Development of and actions under the Gender Equality Scheme will be through involvement of groups representing men and women and service users to identify issues and barriers to services and equal participation in public life.

We will report and act on findings as soon as possible. We believe that by proactively engaging with the community we will continue to gain a good indication of needs, objectives and actions necessary to improve service and employment provision and sharpen our focus in promoting gender equality. We will work with local, and where necessary groups with national coverage to share expertise and knowledge and to develop clear, effective and progressive objectives and actions to take forward Gender Equality. Organisations the Council is currently consulting on Gender Equality are listed in Appendix A and we will include any other appropriate groups in our consultation as we become aware of them.

Research of which the Council is aware indicates a number of areas where there appear to be gender equality issues nationally. Examples include:

- Among single people who experience homelessness, the majority are men, though it is also thought to be the case that 'hidden homelessness' (ie. with relatives of friends on a temporary basis) is greater among women.
- While women may be the majority of users of statutory services, or the majority of those who have to face contact with service providers, this does not necessarily mean that such services are delivered in a gender sensitive manner or address women's needs. With regard to non-

statutory services, such as leisure services, there are some gender differences in usage of these with men being more likely to use sports facilities and women being more likely to use public libraries.

Issues such as these will be taken into consideration along with the results of local consultation when determining future actions.

8. Taking Account of Gender Issues in our Services and Functions

The Council has already begun Equalities Impact Assessments in respect of its services and functions, covering race, disability and gender, carried out by managers who have been trained in this work. We will be developing our work in this area, particularly in the light of work being undertaken as part of the Tailoring our Equality and Diversity Strategy for Worcestershire (T.E.D.S. for Worcestershire) project. Equalities Impact Assessments are also discussed later in this Scheme.

Obtaining information from community groups in general is seen as being important in helping the Council understand the impact of its services and functions and assessing its progress towards equality. Consultation with service users and local groups representing men and women will help to identify issues of concern and help us agree priorities for, and gain assistance with carrying out Equalities Impact Assessments.

Methods of monitoring such things as take up of Council services and any gaps in satisfaction levels are being explored. Focus groups and customer surveys have provided views on Council services for several years. The use of these and other communication channels will be encouraged to improve understanding of service accessibility issues.

When we see that services are having an adverse impact (for instance because of the way they are provided) or where there is a gap between the satisfaction levels of men and women, the Council will ensure that this information is used to remedy or reduce the effects or gaps in service provision. We will share the information corporately (without breaching Data Protection legislation) to build up a picture of where problems arise within specific groups or services.

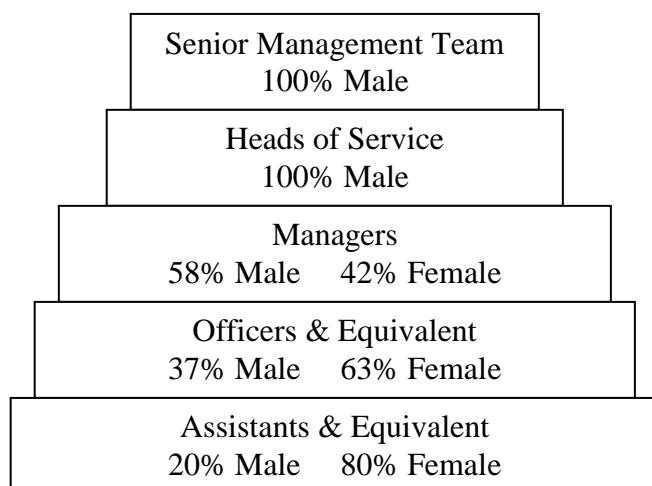
9. Gender Profile of MHDC

Within Malvern Hills District Council, 15 out of 38 Councillors are women (40% - which is higher than 29%, nationally in 2004. One of these is Leader of the Council and another is the Chair of the Strategic Board of Vision 21 (the Malvern Hills District Local Strategic Partnership). Two are members of the Council's Executive Committee, out of a membership of eight Councillors.

Despite the fact that they make up the majority of local government employees nationally, within local government women are concentrated in lower

occupational and lower paid grades. At Malvern Hills District Council this is also the case with no women earning over £45k.

The staff profile at March 2007 was follows:



Local Government Nationally	Chief Executives	Directors	Heads of Service
% Women	17.9%	24.8%	27.9%

Source: Employers' Organisation for Local Government 2005 (England)

While the proportion of men in the Council's workforce at 36% is higher than the England average of 25.6%, and the proportion of women working full-time at 57% is higher than the England average of 40%, women are concentrated in lower status jobs.

Workforce – Male/Female and Hours

	% Workforce	
	Male	Female
MHDC	36%	64%
Local Gov. Nationally	25.6%	74.4%

	Hours			
	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time
	% of Male Workforce		% of Female Workforce	
MHDC	85%	15%	57%	43%
Local Gov. Nationally	76.8%	23.2%	40%	60%

Source: National Figures – Employers’ Organisation for Local Government (2004)

Occupation/Role (MHDC) Segregation by Gender

Department	No. of staff	%Male	%Female
Chief Executive & Directors	3	100	0
Business Support	27	19	81
Community & Economic Development	25	32	68
Customer Services	23	13	87
Democratic Services	4	25	75
Environmental Services	60	87	13
Finance & ICT	27	41	59
Housing, Revenues & Technical Services	36	19	81
Legal Services	9	33	67
Planning	37	54	46
Strategic Support	8	63	37
Careline	13	15	85

(The above figures do not include agency staff or those employed on a consultancy basis)

The Council is also aware of a number of issues found in employment nationally which may be reflected in the make up of our workforce. For instance:

- Women often take career breaks from paid work to care for others. For many this results in limited career progress, lower pay and reduced pensions;
- 4 in 10 mothers and one in 10 fathers have left or turned down a job because of childcare responsibilities (EOC, 2004).

10. Employment with the Council

In addition to gathering information on the effect of our policies and services and how they meet the different needs of men and women, the Council is required to gather information on the extent to which we promote equality between male and female staff.

What data the Council gathers and how it is used is currently being reviewed, including the way in which any issues emerging will be addressed. Where a need for managerial action is highlighted the Head of Strategic Support will report to the Senior Management Team.

All job applicants are selected for jobs purely on their skills and abilities. All personal details are detached from application forms and not seen by those involved in the recruitment process prior to selection. Training is provided to staff involved in recruitment on principles of equal opportunity in recruitment and selection.

We are aware of the issues highlighted above in terms of the workforce profile and will address the apparent 'glass ceiling' for women in terms of entry to senior management. We will also examine ways to allow more women to work full time if they wish and conversely more men to work part-time if desired. We have introduced a Flexible Working Policy which allows different working patterns and working from home which will assist staff who currently may have difficulty working normal office hours, for instance staff with caring responsibilities. Staff with caring responsibilities will be encouraged to discuss these with their manager or Human Resources to see how the Flexible Working Policy may help them or if there are any other ways that the Council may assist them.

A Local Pay and Grading Review is currently being carried out. This will address the issues of Equal Pay and such things as equality of terms and conditions of service. As part of this work an Equal Pay Audit will be carried out and the extent of any pay gap assessed. The Council will work towards the narrowing of this pay gap and aim for its eventual elimination.

11. Assessing Services and Policies Impact on Gender Equality

The purpose of a gender equality impact assessment is twofold:

- to ensure that neither sex is disadvantaged by the Council's decisions and activities
- to identify where the Council can promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

Criteria for assessing the relevance of proposed and current Council services and policies in relation to Gender Equality will be developed in consultation with local groups representing men and women. This will allow services and policies to be prioritised for Equalities Impact Assessment.

We will determine whether:

- the service or policy is a major one in terms of scale or significance for the authority's activities; or
- there is a clear indication that, although the service or policy is minor, it is likely to have a major impact upon men or women. A policy which has an extremely negative impact on a small number of men or women will be of greater relevance than one which has only a minor impact on a large number of men or women.

If a service or policy falls within either of these categories an Equalities Impact Assessment is likely to be of high relevance and required as a High Priority.

The assessment will include:

- i) Consideration of available data, data required and how it will be gathered.
- ii) Consideration of any feedback from or consultation with service users
- iii) Identification of the effect of the service or policy on men or women such as any detrimental impact or shortfall in take up by men or women or missed opportunities to promote gender equality.
- iv) Consideration of ways of reducing any adverse impact and alternative approaches to achieve policy aims which better promote equality for men and women.
- v) Arrangements for monitoring future impact focusing on those most affected by the service or policy.

Gender Equality Objectives will also be determined as a result of consultation. These will address the most significant gender inequalities and areas that have the most potential to promote gender equality.

12. Publication of Actions Taken

Annually, the Council will publish a report giving details of the progress made against the Gender Equality Scheme's Action Plan, and what we have done over the past year to eliminate harassment and discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. The results of information gained through Equalities Impact Assessments, consultation and monitoring will be published along with details of actions taken (or proposed to be taken) as a result. This information will be published on the Council's website, in hard copy and will also be available in variety of other formats such as braille, large print, audio tape etc. Consideration will be given to including this information with other reports which the Council publishes on an annual basis, for example the Council Plan.

13. How to Comment and obtain Further Information

Contributions to the development of Gender Equality are welcomed.

Comments and complaints about any aspects of the Council's services can be made by contacting:

Tina Clarke,
Policy and Projects Officer,
Malvern Hills District Council,
The Council House,
Avenue Road,
Malvern,
Worcs WR14 3AF

Tel: 01684 862477

Textphone: 01684 862186

Email: tina.clarke@malvern hills.gov.uk

Other Formats

The Gender Equality Scheme is available on our website: www.malvern hills.gov.uk . It can also be made available in a range of languages, on tape, in braille, large print and other formats. For further information please contact the above.

14. Action Plan – April 2007 to April 2010

Action & Outcomes	By Whom	By When
Information Gathering & Use		
Consult to establish and review gender equality issues and review gender objectives	Policy & Projects Team & HR	April 2008
Review arrangements for gathering information about performance on gender equality including employment policies & practices (eg. how they are applied)	Diversity Working Group & HR	April 2008
Gradually increase knowledge base and measurement of gender equality progress, putting in place any additional mechanisms necessary for gathering evidence on our performance	Service Units & Policy & Projects Team	April 2008
Conduct an equal pay audit and determine extent of any pay gap. Establish causes and action to rectify.	HR& Policy & Projects Team	October 2007
Conduct gender equality audit on the application of non-pay benefits including conditions of service such as working time and annual leave	HR & Policy & Projects Team	July 2007
Develop an understanding of occupational segregation at the Council and determine follow up action to produce a more gender balanced workforce in all service areas	Diversity Working Group & HR	April 2009
Encourage, through raising awareness, feedback from employees on extent needs met by the Council	HR& Policy & Projects Team	April 2009
Review and strengthen arrangements for gathering information in relation to gender issues in recruitment, development and retention of employees eg. establish effects of staffs caring responsibilities, return rates from pregnancy, take up of paternity leave etc.	HR & Policy & Projects Team	April 2008
Equalities Impact Assessment		
Prioritise activities in consultation with local groups according to relevance, for gender	Diversity Working Group	April 2009

equality impact assessment.		
Establish impact assessment methodology	Diversity Working Group	April 2009
Using Impact Assessments, determine extent to which policies and services, as prioritised, take account of the needs of men and women and establish detailed actions to rectify gaps	Diversity Working Group	April 2010
Communication and Support		
Review communications to include positive action to raise women's awareness eg of public appointments, encourage their participation in public life and career development.	Strategic Support Unit	April 2008
Demonstrate support to and value of staff including transsexuals	HR & Diversity Working Group	April 2008
Ensure employment policies and practice adequately cover transsexual employees	HR	April 2008
Promote a Council culture of respect for dignity of individuals supported by effective complaints procedure for dealing with harassment and sexual harassment	Diversity Working Group	April 2009
Produce internal policy or guidelines on gender identity publicised among staff to help employees be clear on their responsibilities and provide confidence.	HR	April 2008
In procurement: Ensure that contractors deliver Council services paying due regard to gender and other strands of equality.	Service Units and Diversity Working Group	April 2008
Involvement		
Establish and promote ways of encouraging service users and organisations representing men and women to have a greater say in how they think our services affect them from a gender viewpoint, how they can be improved and assist evaluation of whether improvements have been realised.	Diversity Working Group	April 2010

Develop and implement an awareness raising plan in relation to gender issues for use throughout the wider community including other organisations.	Diversity Working Group	End of 2009
Resources		
Investigate and if possible take up opportunities to attract resources for training, research and involvement	Diversity Working Group	April 2008 Onwards
Reporting		
Publish a gender equality progress report annually summarising actions taken, results of information gathering and use of this information	Policy & Projects Team	April 2008 and annually

Gender Equality Scheme – Consultees

Age Concern Malvern & District

Asha Centre (Worcester)

Baby Latte Group

Business and Professional Women UK Limited

Chamber of Commerce, Herefordshire & Worcestershire

Citizen's Advice Bureau

Community Action

Community First

Early Years & Childcare Service

Elgar Area Regeneration Committee

Evesham & Malvern Hills College

Federation of Small Businesses

Festival Housing Group

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

Jobcentre Plus

Learning & Skills Council

Malvern Access Group

Malvern Hills District Council - staff

Malvern Hills Over 50s Forum

Malvern Rugby Football Club

Malvern Special Families

Malvern Town Football Club

Manor Park Club

Oak Crescent Residents' Association

Opportunity Now

Plum Tree Project

Qinetiq

Royal British Legion

Royal British Legion Women's Branch (Worcestershire)

Samaritans

Soroptimists (Worcester & Malvern)

The Gender Trust

Toc H

UNIFEM

UNISON

Worcestershire Association of Service Users

Worcestershire Association of Voluntary Organisations in Community Care

Worcestershire Federation of Women's Institutes

Worcestershire Forum Against Domestic Violence

Worcestershire Mental Health Network