



Standards for England

Single Equality Scheme

March 2010 – 2013

Revised version of the previous July 2008 Diversity
Equality Scheme

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Foreword

We are committed to valuing diversity and promoting equality for everyone at Standards for England (SfE) and for our external customers and stakeholders. We do this by ensuring that we are fair, objective, transparent and free from discrimination in all of our systems, processes, procedures, activities and decisions.

This Single Equality Scheme has been designed to ensure that the concept of equal access is integral to the planning and performance process – from our higher level strategy down to individual planning processes. It is a clear statement of our intent that all members of the organisation are responsible for consideration of diversity in the way that they work.

The Scheme not only incorporates and builds on the existing **Race** Equality Scheme and the **Disability** Equality Scheme, but also includes the new **Age** Equality Scheme and **Gender** Equality Scheme. It also extends the scheme to include **religious belief**, **sexual orientation** and **transgender identity**.

This Scheme sets out our commitment to promote equality and to ensure against discrimination in all our services, and as an employer. Within this Scheme there is an action plan, which is comprised of strategic equality actions, which we will monitor and review on a regular basis.

We intend to go further than just meeting our legislative obligations around equality and diversity. Equality and diversity are embedded throughout our organisation, and we are committed to continuing to focus on reducing inequality and narrowing gaps.

Dr Robert Chilton

Chairman

Glenys Stacey

Chief Executive

Introduction

The Scheme sets out our ambition and intent to work towards promoting equality for everyone and eradicating discrimination. It represents our intentions and sets out our action plan for the next three years.

This was approved by the Chair on behalf of the Board on 01/03/10.

The Scheme brings together and builds upon:

- Our aims and priorities of building equality into what we do;
- How we deliver our services and ensure that they are fair, equitable and accessible;
- Our aim of promoting equality in our working practices, including procurement and the attitude to equality of those third parties that we deal with.
- Other equality friendly policies that we have in place, such as our Equal Opportunities Policy, Attendance and Leave Policy and Flexible Working Policy.

How we have developed the Scheme

This Scheme is a revision of our existing equality and diversity policy. Independent advice and guidance have been obtained from external consultants, including a full gap analysis of the existing scheme. We also benchmarked against Single Equality Schemes of comparable organisations and engaged the various service delivery departments within SfE (Investigations, Monitoring and Guidance).

Consultation has been undertaken with a range of internal and external stakeholders, and we will continue to seek feedback as our Scheme is developed, and our action plan implemented.

The Senior Management Diversity Champion will monitor progress, ensure regular reviews, and continue to champion the rights for and of all staff and stakeholders at SfE. They will feed

their progress back to the Chief Executive regularly. The Senior Management Diversity Champion will also chair the Diversity Steering Group, the structure and function of which is currently under review.

About Standards for England

What we do

SfE builds confidence in local democracy by promoting the ethical behaviour of members and co-opted members who serve on a range of authorities. This involves receiving and investigating allegations that members may have breached the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007.

We have moved to a new role as a strategic regulator and this has seen the majority of investigations taking place at a local level. As a result, our focus is on overseeing investigations and the ethical framework more generally.

SfE provides support and guidance to authorities so that they in turn can support their members in ensuring ethical behaviour. We also seek out and promote good practice so that authorities may learn from their peers. It is important that we monitor how local Standards Committees are handling cases and their basic duties and to ensure that this is being done fairly and appropriately.

Our aims and objectives

We believe in principled politics and our vision is of a local government community which demonstrates high ethical standards, together with an electorate that recognises that principles matter to local government.

Our approach to our job of championing and promoting high standards of conduct amongst our local politicians is reflected in our values: guardianship, robustness, positive leadership, diligence and ethical behaviour.

Governance & Funding

SfE is a non-departmental public body, formally established in March 2001 by an Act of Parliament. We are accountable to Parliament and funded through our sponsoring Government department, Communities and Local Government.

The overall strategy and work programme of Standards for England is set by this Board, which is also responsible for scrutinising the organisation's activities. The Board consists of a Chair, a Deputy Chair and other members, four of whom are elected local politicians and represent the three main political parties and independent councillors. All of the Board members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Equality in Employment and the Workforce

The success of SfE depends on our people. We are committed to valuing diversity and promoting equality for everyone at SfE. Competent and motivated employees are essential in today's competitive environment and therefore SfE needs to ensure the best use of human resources in its workforce. We recognise the varied contributions that a diverse workforce brings to the organisation and we are committed to drawing on the different perspectives and experiences of individuals which will add value to the way we operate.

We are committed to ensuring that policies and practices that affect our staff are fair and promote equality. We want all our staff to be fully involved in the work of SfE; to protect them from unfair treatment; to provide accurate job descriptions, work plans, appraisals and related performance and monitoring systems; and to give them the necessary support, development opportunities and training.

As part of the new organisation design, new job descriptions and competencies have been developed for all staff. The new competency on 'supporting and co-operating' covers respect and

the promotion of equal opportunities and diversity in the work place. As such, all managers are required to set objectives based on this competency.

We implement personal disability plans tailored for each disabled employee as a means of reviewing any reasonable adjustments identified on an ongoing basis, ensuring that new IT software meets the minimum accessibility requirements and that the visual style guide meets the most up to date best practice requirements.

Equality in our Service Delivery

Guidance

SfE provides advice, guidance and information on the local standards framework, including the Code of Conduct. Our Guidance and Information Advisers deal with a variety of queries via written correspondence, telephone helpline or email. These services are accessed by the general public and by councillors.

They also produce guidance and other helpful written material, in a range of formats including publications, e-bulletins, DVDs, training materials and presentations. These materials are produced specifically for use by councillors and council monitoring officers.

Monitoring

A key objective within SfE is to ensure the success of the local standards framework. As such, it is important that we monitor how local Standards Committees are handling cases and their basic duties and to ensure that this is being done fairly and appropriately. The Monitoring team are responsible for collecting the evidence that allows us to do this. They have developed an online form for monitoring officers of local authorities to complete on a quarterly and annual basis.

The Monitoring team are responsible for publishing statistics on the website, based on the information obtained from the quarterly

and annual monitoring returns. They also run a telephone helpline, aimed at Monitoring officers, providing assistance in filling out the returns.

Investigations

Investigating allegations of misconduct is one of the ways in which we at SfE can work to build confidence in local democracy. The standards committee of a local authority may refer an allegation for investigation to us if it believes that it cannot or should not investigate it locally.

Our Commitment

We are committed to ensuring that our services are available to all. As such, whatever the means of communication or publication, we strive to make our information as accessible as possible and will make reasonable adjustments where required.

Our Stakeholders – The Regulated Community

The LGA 2008 Councillor survey revealed the following about the 19,617 Local Councillors in England: 68 % male and 31 % female (compared to national average of 49 % male and 51 % female); an average age of 59 (national average – 39, although this also includes those who are not of ‘working age’); 97 % white and 3 % other ethnic background (national average – 92 % white and 8 % other ethnic background); 13 % long-term illness, health problem or disability (national average – 18 %).

Legal duty

The development of this Single Equality Scheme fulfils part of our obligations under the following relevant legislation:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended)
- Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended)
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Act 2002
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- Work and Families Act 2006
- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

Equality Impact Assessments

In the development of any policies or processes, it is important to consider any potential equality or diversity related impact the aim or implementation of these might have. Equality impact assessments (EIAs) will be undertaken by Management to identify and minimise any negative impact from policies and practices, against all the equality strands. These will enable us to consider any potential risk to different groups and provide an opportunity to consider how a policy may help to further develop equality. Relevant members of staff will receive training to ensure that they are fully able to carry out effective Equality Impact Assessments.

SfE is currently reviewing our schedule to ensure that all of our policies and procedures, both past and future, undergo Equality Impact Assessments.

Responsibilities and accountability

The Board have appointed a Board Diversity Champion, whose role it is to scrutinise the organisation's commitment to diversity, monitor achievements and to ensure that diversity matters are raised and brought to the fore at Board meetings. The Board will receive regular reports and an annual update on the targets set out in the action plan.

The Chief Executive has appointed a Senior Management Diversity Champion. Their role is to ensure that diversity matters are brought to the fore and discussed at SMT meetings, provide a steer on the direction to be taken on diversity within the organisation, monitor effective implementation of the diversity action plan and become involved in undertaking EIAs. The Senior Management Diversity Champion will also chair the Diversity Steering Group, the structure and function of which is currently under review.

We will monitor our actions on a regular basis and this will be incorporated into our performance management framework and business planning.

We welcome feedback about our progress from stakeholders. We will communicate our progress in an annual review, and through our website and other forms of communication that we regularly use.

Action plan

Item:	Action:	Tasks:	Responsibility:	Completion date:
Governance				
1	Ensure Board understanding of their duties.	Board members equality and diversity training – to establish clear responsibilities in the leadership of SfE. Issue a board paper to inform them of their duties. This should also go to Senior Managers on SMT.	Strategic Relations	Sept 2010
2	Equality and Diversity research.	As part of the Board's Research Strategy, they will consider whether it is appropriate to commission research into ethical aspects of equality and diversity in public life.	Standards	May 2010
Workforce				
3	Collect staff Equality Monitoring data.	HR will continue to collate equality data for the organisation, using the new diversity categories as proposed for the 2011 census. This is then reported to SMT and the Board on a regular basis HR to adopt the 2011 census diversity category headings into their relevant forms. Also consider other diversity groups who are not on the list but appropriate to consider such as part time workers and carers. HR will then set appropriate targets that are in line with the demographic of the local community.	Planning Services	Ongoing Ongoing

Item:	Action:	Tasks:	Responsibility:	Completion date:
		Amend the staff survey to collect information against all existing and proposed equality strands and review the diversity related questions accordingly.		April 2010
4	Research into reasons for any dissatisfaction of female members of staff, identified in the staff survey.	<p>The staff survey suggested that Female staff tend to be less satisfied with many aspects of their work and the organisation compared to male staff.</p> <p>As such:</p> <p>New Managers and Directors will be briefed on the results of this survey and the people strategy will be given time to be implemented effectively.</p> <p>A second staff survey will be undertaken, in April 2010. This will inform of whether there have been improvements in the views of women versus men, possibly down to better leadership and communications, implemented as a result of actions from the people strategy.</p> <p>If there are still similar gaps in the second staff survey, SfE will hold a focus group of female volunteers to ask further clarifying questions to understand any particular gender related issues.</p>	Standards & Planning Services	<p>April 2010</p> <p>June 2010</p>

Item:	Action:	Tasks:	Responsibility:	Completion date:
5	To identify workforce levels according to the equality demographic of the local area and take positive steps in recruitment and retention practices to move towards them.	<p>We need to set aspirational workforce levels. We only have a small workforce and losing one person can skew the figures dramatically. So, bearing this in mind, we need to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set similar aspirations and benchmark our organisation against them, to determine where the gaps are. - Monitor against these within the HR dashboard. - Consider what approach we take to filling any gaps such as what press/ venues we advertise in. Ensure that all vacancies are publicised in a broad and diverse variety of community media. - Use the current restructure to address where workforce profile targets are currently not being met. -Monitor progress annually. <p>We currently ask departing staff to complete an exit questionnaire and this is often followed by an exit interview. We will review these to ensure that we capture the views of individuals who leave because of equality and diversity issues.</p>	Planning Services	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>May 2010</p>

Item:	Action:	Tasks:	Responsibility:	Completion date:
6	Continued internal consultation with staff.	We will hold focus groups (with different age groups for example). We will look at what other similar organisations do to see if there is any best practice we can adopt.	Planning Services	Ongoing
7	Review the pay and grading of staff against equality strands and identify any barriers to progression of staff, on grounds of race, gender, disability or age.	<p>An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken into the April 2009-10 staff pay distribution, with figures on the ratings split into groups including race, gender, age and level in hierarchy.</p> <p>A full EIA into the new pay structure to be undertaken and subsequently reviewed on an annual basis.</p>	Planning Services	April 2010
Service Delivery				
8	Ensure accessibility to the services we provide and information we publish. Communicate more clearly the ways in which we are willing and able to cater for disability.	<p>We do provide, on request, our guidance and information in a range of formats, in Braille and in different languages. However, we will review whether there is a need to make it clearer that we do provide these services.</p> <p>We work very closely with our regulated community to ensure they have access to the information they need, but we do not have comprehensive information on their profile and needs. We will look at the feasibility and usefulness of collecting this information.</p>	Regulation	<p>June 2010</p> <p>June 2010</p>

Item:	Action:	Tasks:	Responsibility:	Completion date:
		<p>We regularly collect feedback on the usefulness and clarity of guidance and information we provide via a survey every two years of councillors and monitoring officers. However, we do not collect equality monitoring information in these surveys, which means we cannot disaggregate the data by the equality strands. We will begin collecting feedback on accessibility for our users based on the equality strands.</p> <p>The organisation will adopt the 2011 census diversity category headings and commit to using these, where appropriate, in all its internal and external research and consultation. This will ensure that the monitoring information the organisation collects is aligned and comparable' as an action within the Service Delivery section.</p> <p>We will review how we deal with potentially sensitive equality and diversity issues when carrying out investigations.</p> <p>We are arranging for external counsel to provide opinion to include examples of how a member's actions can result in their authority breaching</p>		<p>June 2010</p> <p>June 2010</p> <p>Sept 2010</p> <p>Sept 2010</p>

Item:	Action:	Tasks:	Responsibility:	Completion date:
		<p>equalities legislation. We are working with EHRC on this together. Appropriate guidance will then be developed accordingly.</p>		
Procurement				
9	<p>Ensure that the procurement function scrutinises suppliers' equality and diversity policies and practices.</p>	<p>We are currently reviewing our Procurement Policy and associated processes. We will ensure that all required equality related considerations are embedded within these so that we know our suppliers have in place the appropriate equality and diversity policies and practices.</p>	Standards	Sept 2010
Building Access				
10	<p>Ensure accessibility to the building for all staff.</p>	<p>Continue to liaise with our landlord's building managers to ensure that the premises within which our offices are based remain DDA compliant.</p> <p>Continue to ensure that our office is accessible for people with a disability and to adopt an inclusive approach to making reasonable adjustments where this is not the case.</p> <p>Give all due consideration to accessibility in any future office refurbishment.</p>	Planning Services	Ongoing

Item:	Action:	Tasks:	Responsibility:	Completion date:
Training & Development				
11	Equality training for Managers.	<p>Provide training and guidance for Managers, specific to effective management of a diverse workforce and to assist them in setting diversity objectives for staff, which are linked to their work priorities.</p> <p>Continue to ensure that all new Managers will attend the externally provided Equality & Diversity training.</p> <p>All Managers will attend externally provided training on the undertaking of EIAs.</p>	Planning Services & Standards	<p>June 2010</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>June 2010</p>
12	Equality training for staff.	Continue to ensure that all new staff will attend the externally provided Equality & Diversity training.	Planning Services & Standards	Ongoing
Monitoring - of Equality and of the Single Equality Scheme				
13	Revise EIA guidance and procedures.	<p>The EIA template will be improved.</p> <p>A three year plan will be established to timetable and prioritise future EIA requirements.</p>	Standards	June 2010
14	Introduce equality into the monitoring data that we collect.	<p>We monitor the profile of those who access our information services. But the quality of this data needs strengthening. This includes callers to our helpline and those who correspond with us via email and letter.</p> <p>The Regulation Directorate has begun a process by which it sends a customer satisfaction feedback form</p>	<p>Standards & Regulation</p> <p>Standards & Regulation</p>	<p>June 2010</p> <p>June 2010</p>

Item:	Action:	Tasks:	Responsibility:	Completion date:
		to those involved in an investigation, namely the subject member, the complainant or witnesses, once the case has been resolved. A feasibility study will be undertaken into the inclusion of equality monitoring questions and questions on satisfaction with accessibility and reasonable adjustments.		
15	Ascertain the diversity of Standards Committee members.	There are legal requirements regarding the structure of local Standards Committees, and so we already ask questions around this. We do not currently ask questions regarding the diversity of Standards Committee members. We will undertake a feasibility study into the benefits of finding out this wider diversity related information, in our annual and quarterly returns.	Standards	June 2010
16	Monitor, review, report on and publish the Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan	We will monitor the progress of the actions and ensure their completion within the allocated completion dates. We will annually review the Scheme and Action Plan.		Ongoing

Appendix A - Standards for England Workforce and Board profile statistics

(as at March 2010)

Of a total workforce of 83:

Age	
17yrs - 29yrs	27 %
30yrs - 39yrs	37 %
40yrs - 49yrs	18 %
50yrs -64yrs	18 %

Gender	
Male	47 %
Female	53 %

Declared Disability 1.2 %

Race	
BME	5 %
White	95 %

Of the 9 members of the Board:

Age	
17yrs - 29yrs	0 %
30yrs - 39yrs	11 %
40yrs - 49yrs	22 %
50yrs -64yrs	67 %

Gender	
Male	56 %
Female	44 %

Declared Disability 11.1 %

Race	
BME	11 %
White	89 %

The above compare with the following national averages:

Gender – 49 % male, 51 % female;

Average age – 39;

Race – 92 % white, 8 % other ethnic background;

18 % long term illness, health problem or disability.

Appendix B - List of internal and external stakeholders used for consultation

Internal stakeholders

- Board members
- Senior Management Team
- Staff Council
- PCS (Union)
- Registered disabled employee
- Representatives from each of our service delivery areas

External stakeholders

- ACSeS (Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors)
- Audit Commission
- AIMScE (Association of Independent members of Standards Committees in England)
- CLG (Communities and Local Government)
- Manchester Equalities Parliament
- NALC (National Association of Local Councils)
- LGA (Local Government Association)
- First Tier Tribunal
- Beamans Management Consultants
- Reed Training

Consultation responses are available upon request.