
North Ayrshire Gender Equality Scheme 2007/10

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1. Foreword

The Council aims to build a better North Ayrshire. An important aspect of achieving this is to ensure that there is equality and fairness for men and women in all of our activities.

This applies to the Council in its role as an employer in areas such as recruitment and flexible working, as well as equal pay. It also applies to the Council in delivering its services where it seeks to ensure there is no discrimination or imbalance between men and women or between boys and girls.

We have asked our employees and have consulted local people for their views on gender equality issues. These views have been used in the development of this Scheme and have informed the priorities identified in it and in the action plan.

The main purpose of this work is to make sure that no one is disadvantaged because of their gender. The Council will continue to monitor and scrutinise its activities to make sure that the priorities of this Scheme are taken forward and help to build a better North Ayrshire for everyone

David O'Neill
Leader of North Ayrshire Council

June 2007

2. Summary

A new duty has been placed on the Council to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment; and
- Promote equality of opportunity between men and women

In addition, specific duties have been introduced which require that the Council prepares and publishes a Gender Equality Scheme. This Scheme describes what the Council has done in:

- Consulting with staff, service users and others (including trade unions) through questionnaire surveys, focus groups, the People's Panel and the Household Survey.
- Taking into account information on how its policies and practices affect gender equality in the workplace and in service delivery, through the analysis of a range of statistical and other information.
- Formulating its gender equality objectives, including consideration of the causes of the gender pay gap. These objectives are included in the scheme and how they will be tackled is expanded on in more detail in the attached Action Plan.
- Developing processes for assessing the impact of its policies and practices on men and women.

The Council must also publish an equal pay statement and this is incorporated into the scheme. There is a separate requirement on Education authorities to produce a gender equality scheme and equal pay statement. This scheme is conjoined with the Council's scheme.

The Gender Equality Scheme details the strategic links which exist to the Council's

priorities and major strategic documents, including the Council Plan. The process of preparing the scheme, its approval by the Executive Committee of the Council, and the development of its priority objectives are described in the initial sections.

The consultation carried out and the information gathered to inform the schemes detailed within Section 6. This was used to develop the priority objectives which relate to:

- Employment – job segregation, work life balance, and equal pay
- Housing - homelessness, community safety and domestic abuse
- Social Services – personal care

The priority objectives for the Council as an employer are provided in more detail in the Section 10 on employment. The scheme also includes the Council's equal pay policy statement.

Arrangements for gathering and using information on its activities are included, together with details of the equality impact assessment process approved by the Council in 2006. The Scheme also describes the connections to procurement and to its partnership working in promoting gender equality.

An Action Plan is attached to the scheme and it describes in detail how Council services will address the priority objectives. There will be an annual report published on the implementation of the scheme as part of the Council annual equality report. It will be reviewed and revised every three years.

The Scheme will continue to evolve and develop over the next three years. Any comments or views on how the Council could make further progress in tackling gender equality would be most welcome. These should be sent to the Chief Executive, North Ayrshire Council, Cunninghame House, Irvine, KA12 8EE or emailed to madams@north-ayrshire.gov.uk.

3. Our Commitment

3.1 Council Plan

The Council Plan 2006/09 describes the Council's overall aim as being to build a better North Ayrshire through sustainable regeneration and the continuous improvement of Council services. Central to this, as one of the Plan's key priorities, is reducing disadvantage and promoting equal opportunities. The Plan also stresses that equality is a Council value - "treating people respectfully, fairly and equally".

The Council is clearly committed to tackling any discrimination or harassment against men or women in its workforce and in the way it delivers its services. It also has a positive commitment to promoting equality for men and women which involves taking steps to make sure better public services are provided for all.

The Council Plan contains an action point on the development and implementation of this Gender Equality Scheme. This provides a clear, corporate commitment at the highest level to this work. Progress on the Scheme is being monitored regularly through the Council Plan performance reporting. This will ensure that elected members and the Council's Corporate Management Team can monitor the position in the implementation of the Scheme and ensures transparency in taking forward this work.

There will also be reports in future to the Council's recently established Scrutiny Committee to allow further engagement and involvement with elected members in the progress of the Scheme.

The commitment to develop the Gender Equality Scheme within the Council Plan is linked to an additional action point in the Plan "to develop and monitor the Council's Equal Opportunity policy to ensure

compliance with its duties relating to race, disability, gender, age, religious belief and sexual orientation".

3.2 Equal Opportunities Policy

The Equal Opportunities policy outlines in more detail the Council's commitment to equality as a core value in all of its work and provides information on the implementation of the policy, including how equality is to be mainstreamed throughout all of its activities. It provides details on responsibilities for equalities within the Council and is supported by a Corporate Equality Action Plan which will be linked to the action plan accompanying this scheme.

Mainstreaming gender equality into the day-to-day activities of the Council will be an important means of fulfilling this new gender equality duty. This should encourage change in the most relevant areas of the Council's work.

The Equal Opportunities policy stresses the importance of equality being addressed in the service plans for all its services. Mechanisms are in place in the guidance and the framework for service plans so that services are required to acknowledge the links to this commitment to equality in the Council Plan. This is also a recognition of the strong links to the best value framework.

3.3 Community Plan

As the lead partner on the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership, the Council is also fully committed to its vision of "North Ayrshire – A Better Life." Achieving equality is a shared priority for all partners and the outcomes and challenges for all partners are described within the "For you and for everyone" section of the North Ayrshire Community Plan 2006/16. The Action Plan associated with the Community Plan indicates that a

Gender Equality Scheme will be published by all relevant public agencies.

This Gender Equality Scheme is a description of how the Council will meet the commitments to promoting gender equality made in both of these major strategic documents governing its activities. The equality commitments made in both the Council and the Community Plans for North Ayrshire provide evidence of the links to the Council's priorities and its strategic planning.

3.4 Race and Disability Equality Schemes

The Gender Equality Scheme is also linked to the Council's Race and Disability Equality Schemes. The creation of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights in October 2007 will have important implications for future work in tackling inequality. It should assist in ensuring that work is focussed on removing the barriers to dealing with the most persistent inequalities being faced by people in our communities, particularly in relation to employment and education and to consider these in an integrated way. The findings of the recent Equalities Review commissioned by the Government make important recommendations on such integration.

The Council intends to develop its reporting on its Race, Disability and Gender Schemes to bring this together effectively and also to strengthen the links between them in the future, reflecting the national developments in connection with the new Commission and the national Equalities Review report.

4. Key Facts

North Ayrshire is approximately 25 south-west of Glasgow. It has a total area of 340 miles, almost equally divided between the mainland and the islands of Arran and Cumbrae. It had a resident population of 135,830 people in 2005.

The following statistics highlight some of the gender differences in North Ayrshire:

- The 2001 Census indicated that 52.7% of the population was female and 47.3% male, with the proportion of women increasing in the older age group
- 8 (27%) of the 30 Councillors elected to North Ayrshire Council in 2007 were women, and 22 (73%) were men, compared to 10 (33%) women and 20 (66%) men in 2003. The Scottish average for women elected to local government in 2003 was 22%
- In 42 out of 53 North Ayrshire Primary Schools during 2005/06 girls performed either better or significantly better than boys in reading tests. This is consistent with national and international trends but does not tend to translate into better pay or jobs for women
- The average number of exclusions from school for girls was 3.8 per 1000 pupils in 2005/06 and was 35 per 1000 for boys
- Men are more likely to be homeless than women, with 880 men and 760 women seeking help from the Council's Housing Services in 2005/06. There were more homeless young women (380), however, than young men (335) but the number of men increased in the older age groups (25 years+)

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- there were 1,204 incidents of domestic abuse reported to Strathclyde Police in North Ayrshire in 2005/06, an increase of 63 over the previous year, with women being the victims in most cases.
 - in 2006/07 North Ayrshire Council employed 5156 women (71% of the workforce) and 2078 men (29%)

The Council has an important role to play in addressing these issues. This Scheme describes its activities in tackling discrimination and gender inequality.

5. Promoting Gender Equality

5.1 The Gender Equality Duty

The Council is committed to promoting gender equality and to fulfilling this new legal duty. It will involve reassessing its planning, consultation, and employment procedures and considering how it delivers its services to women and men so that they are available to everyone.

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975, as amended by the Equality Act 2006, places a statutory duty on all public authorities when carrying out their functions to have due regard to the need:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment; and
- To promote equality of opportunity between men and women

This general duty came into effect on 6 April 2007. It applies to policy making, service provision and employment matters, as well as to services and functions which the Council has contracted out.

As part of the duty, the Council is required to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment in employment and vocational training for people who undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment (transsexual people).

5.2 Specific Duties

In addition to the general duty, there are also specific duties placed on the Council by the Sex Discrimination (Public Authorities) (Statutory Duties) (Scotland) Order 2007 which came into force on 9 April 2007. The Order requires that a Gender Equality Scheme be prepared and published by 29 June 2007 and that an

equal pay statement is published by 28 September 2007.

The specific duties on the Council require it:

- to publish a gender equality scheme identifying their gender equality goals which must be monitored and reviewed every three years;
- to publish and review an equal pay policy
- to publish gender equality impact assessments

The Statutory Code of Practice (Scotland) on the Gender Equality Duty gives guidance on how to meet these duties. It also indicates that the duty “is intended to address the fact that, despite 30 years of individual legal rights to sex equality, there is still widespread discrimination - sometimes intentional and sometimes unintentional - and persistent gender inequality.”

The purpose of the new duty is to make gender equality central to the Council’s activities and to create:

- Better informed decision making and policy development
- A clearer understanding of the needs of service users
- Better quality services which meet varied needs
- More effective targeting of policy and resources
- Better results and greater confidence in public services
- A more effective use of talent in the workforce

The Council has also considered the need to have an objective relating to the difference between the pay of its male and female employees and this is addressed within the sections of the Scheme on Employment and Equal Pay.

The Council is required within the Scheme to set out the actions it has taken or intends to take to:

- Gather information on how its policies and practices affect men and women, particularly its own employees and the delivery of its services
- Make use of all relevant information to promote gender equality and to regularly review progress in achieving the objectives within this Scheme
- Assess the impact of its policies and practices on men and women
- Consult relevant staff, service users and others (including trade unions)
- Achieve the objectives set out in this Scheme

The Scheme must be revised in three years and progress in achieving its objectives must be reported on annually.

5.3 Education

There is also a requirement that the Council make arrangements for each school under its management to:

- Gather information on the effect of their policies and practices on male and female pupils
- Assess the impact of their policies and practices on them
- Provide an annual progress report and
- Take steps to promote gender equality

Education authorities are required to produce their own gender equality scheme and equal pay statement. The North Ayrshire Education Scheme and Statement is conjoined with the Council’s scheme and comprises a separate section of this Scheme. The North Ayrshire Licensing Board is also producing a Gender Equality Scheme.

5.4 Preparing the Gender Equality Scheme

The Council's Corporate Equality Officers Group has been responsible for overseeing the development of this Scheme. The Group comprises representatives of the Council's four main Service Groups, Educational, Corporate, Property and Social Services. Its officers have assisted in the survey and consultation work carried out and in commenting on draft versions of the scheme. There has been a wide consultation across the Council on the draft Scheme and with the Corporate Management Team.

Strategic leadership is important in directing activity on the new gender equality duty. The involvement of elected members is vital in ensuring that the Council fulfils its new duties and places sufficient emphasis on this work. There will be training for councillors on their corporate responsibilities in this regard.

The final Scheme has been considered and approved by the recently established Executive Committee of the Council. A report on the Scheme will also be submitted to the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership Board.

There will be reporting in future on the implementation of the Scheme to the Council's Scrutiny Committee through annual reporting on progress of the Council Plan and in Annual Equality reports.

6. Consultation

The Council is required to consult stakeholders (i.e. staff, services users and others, including trade unions) and take account of relevant information in order to determine its gender equality objectives. It has carried out such consultation over the last year and has also drawn on a number of past consultations and other relevant information.

This information has been used to ensure that the priorities identified in this Scheme and Action Plan are developed out of the evidence and research available, as well as from the views of employees and other stakeholders. This section of the Scheme details the information gathered to provide evidence for the priorities set by the Council.

Views of Employees

The views of the Council's employees on gender issues affecting them as employees and as service providers was obtained from:

- The findings of focus group research by external consultants with groups of male and female employees
- The results of a questionnaire survey completed by each Council service on the gender issues relating to their service

Views of Service Users

The views of the public as service users were obtained from the People's Panel surveys carried out in 2006 and 2007, as well as from the Household Survey 2004 of all households in North Ayrshire.

Views of others, including Trade Unions

There was a questionnaire survey carried out to obtain the views of the Trades Unions and information has also been drawn from a range of consultations such

as the issues raised through the Women's Network and the needs assessment of the local black and ethnic minority community.

6.1 Gender Equality Focus Group Research

In early 2007, the Council commissioned external consultants, Lowland Market Research, to carry out focus group research with its employees. This was done to allow an independence to employees when commenting on the Council as an employer and a robust means of obtaining information and analysis on the gender issues for them. The purpose of the work was to inform the gender priorities of the Council and, in particular, the development of the Action Plan attached to this Scheme.

The research methodology involved a cross-section of staff being identified taking account as far as possible of gender, age, Council services and job type. There were four groups, two of male and two of female employees. This was done to allow different responses by each gender. Two of the groups, one male and one female, were made up of former manual or craft workers and the other two were made up of former administrative or professional staff.

The focus groups were held in May 2007 and a full report on their findings is available. The key points arising out of the focus groups' discussions were:

- In relation to job segregation, it was considered that there are now opportunities in all job areas and there are no longer barriers
- In relation to flexible working, employees such as joiners who are predominantly men tend to work fixed hours and there is little opportunity for flexi time, compressed hours, etc. Catering and cleaning staff (who are

mostly women) have more opportunity to work variable hours.

- Women are seen as being more likely than men to take up job share, part time work, etc.
- Male employees can be expected to undertake heavier, dirtier or more dangerous work e.g. in homecare or at reception desks with more difficult customers
- The Council was considered to provide equal opportunities to men and women in relation to jobs or careers and many barriers were seen to be societal
- There was some awareness of policies such as special leave and of the childcare voucher scheme but a concern that there does not seem to be a consistency in how they are applied at times
- Issues of harassment or discrimination are seen to be taken very seriously within the Council

Overall, it may be concluded from these discussions that as an employer the Council is viewed positively as making job opportunities available equally to men and women and to tackling any discrimination or harassment effectively. Working conditions and terms and conditions of employment are also perceived to generally good, with more women than men taking up options for flexible working.

There are some issues for management training in relation to the application of policies and for some of the other points raised regarding working conditions and flexible working which will be included in the Action Plan.

The focus groups clearly viewed the Council and issues such as job segregation as being part of the gender

issue affecting wider society as a whole. This ties into the Scottish Executive Gender Audit findings about the disadvantages women can face related to taking on the main responsibility as carers in the family, differences in the labour market, and the use of flexible forms of working.

This Scheme and its Action Plan describe initiatives proposed by the Council which seek to contribute towards tackling these wider inequalities faced by men and women.

6.2 Consultation with Council Services

In order to obtain evidence from Council services of the priorities for their male and female service users, a questionnaire survey was carried out in January 2007. The purpose of the survey was to obtain information from Council officers of their experience of gender issues raised in the past in relation to their service. Each Head of Service was asked for information to:

- Identify any recent research into barriers and unsatisfactory outcomes faced by men and women
- Identify existing activity and issues for Services in promoting gender equality
- Establish information gathered which has been disaggregated by gender and how this information is used
- Identify any proposals for the future collection of information by gender
- Identify any current services provided on a single sex basis.

The survey form was issued to the Council's Corporate, Property, Social and Educational Services. The issues raised by Educational Services are dealt with in a separate section of this Scheme which forms the Gender Equality Scheme for the Council as an Education Authority. Information on service delivery issues affecting Educational services are also reported within the Education scheme.

The responses to this survey indicated a number of issues which have been raised in relation to promoting gender equality:-

- Within Housing Services, separate accommodation is provided on a single sex basis to vulnerable, homeless young women.
- In homeless hostels men's health sessions are held which aim to promote health improvement to homeless men
- Homeless men and women are offered a choice in the gender of their interviewing officers, as are other Housing service users.
- Assistance is provided through North Ayrshire Women's Aid to women experiencing violence and domestic abuse and this is co-ordinated through Housing Services. This recognises that it is mostly women who seek such help from the Council.
- Housing Services is developing an equal opportunities harassment policy to address harassment on the basis of gender, as well as other forms.
- A home security project has been established which provides support and practical assistance to victims of harassment and domestic abuse, with the aim of assisting them to remain in their home and to prevent homelessness. As victims of domestic abuse are predominantly women, this project mainly supports women.
- In Social Services there can be sensitivities about the gender of workers providing intimate personal care. If someone is uncomfortable with a worker of an opposite sex, then a worker of the same sex is reassigned to them.

- Personnel Services is reviewing the Special Leave Scheme and continues to promote the Council's Work/Life balance policy and Childcare Voucher Scheme.
- Various services are aware of the job segregation within sectors such as homecare, catering and cleaning.

Housing, Social Services and Personnel were the main services which identified developments or initiatives which have been designed to respond to gender equality issues. Some other services found it difficult to identify any particular issue or barrier for men and women using their services.

From this internal survey of services, the main issues for North Ayrshire Council can be categorised as relating to:

- Housing - homelessness, domestic abuse and community safety;
- Social Services - personal care
- Personnel - job segregation, work life balance, and equal pay/job evaluation

This survey provides evidence of where there has been progress made in the past in responding to local need and gives an indication of the priority areas for Council services. The issues for Educational Services are dealt with in the Education scheme

6.3 Consultation with Trades Unions

In order to obtain the views of the Trades Unions about the priorities which should be addressed within the Scheme, a letter and questionnaire was sent out to the Unions representing Council employees seeking their views.

The Union response made the following points:

Employment Related Policies

It would be useful:

- To ensure a consistent approach in the application of policies, in particular on flexible working and special leave
- To provide a gender breakdown of staff using policies to establish a better understanding of their use
- To assess jointly with the Unions the effectiveness of implementing policy
- To promote policies in a positive way to employees
- To consider an employment policy to support transsexual women and men

Training

There can be barriers to accessing training for women as:

- the timing, duration and venue can be inconvenient for childcare arrangements
- Job share and part time workers (who are predominantly women) can find it difficult to attend full day training

Promotion

The Union advised that many low paid posts lack career structures, e.g. homecare, catering, and cleansing, and so there may be little investment in career progression.

Job Segregation

It was acknowledged that within local government men and women in some services are distributed in the workforce either by seniority (vertical segregation) or by work type (occupational segregation) but that is a reflection in local government of the traditional gender roles in society.

Service Delivery

The Unions noted that Social Services' day care for the elderly tends to be used mostly by women and staffed mainly by women. Men tend not to access these services.

The Trade Unions indicated that on other policy issues, it would be useful to ensure manager training and consistency across services. The Unions also welcomed the opportunity to participate in implementing the action plan and to assist in further consultation with employees.

6.4 Consultation with Service Users

People's Panel Survey 2007

In order to obtain information from the public as users of Council Services questions on gender equality were incorporated into the Community Planning Partnership's People's Panel Survey for Spring 2007.

The People's Panel Survey is carried out twice a year. The Panel contains 2,000 members, representative of the population of North Ayrshire. In total 1,000 live within the Regeneration areas of North Ayrshire, covering the most deprived 15% of datazones in Scotland, and 1,000 live in the rest of North Ayrshire. The information provided through these surveys can be broken down by gender.

The Spring Survey asked the following questions of the Panel:

1. How involved do you feel in the decision-making and policy-making on the issues which affect you?

Just over a third (38%) of respondents said that they feel either fairly or very involved in such decision making. Women indicated that they felt slightly more involved and men slightly less, with a difference of 2% between them.

An analysis has also been done by gender of the office bearers in the 12 Community Councils in North Ayrshire. This found that 37% were male and 63% female which may reflect the National Gender Audit findings that women tend to be more involved in volunteering activities.

2. Do you feel that there is a difference in the way the council delivers its services to men and women?

The majority of respondents (93%) consider there is no difference in the way services are delivered and there was no difference between male and female respondents' replies to this question. The comments made by people who consider there is a difference related mainly to housing and employment issues

3. Have you experienced discrimination because of your gender?

In total, 9% of respondents said that they had experienced discrimination because of their gender. This rises to 11% of female respondents and drops to 7% among male respondents.

In the responses to this question respondents advised of their experience of discrimination mainly at work, in applying for jobs and for promotion.

4. Do you consider that there is discrimination in employment?

The majority of respondents were of the opinion either that there is no discrimination in employment (35%) or they don't know (40%). More women felt that there is discrimination against them than men.

5. Do you consider there is a need for more flexible working or childcare provision to help people in work?

Just over two thirds of respondents (69%) stated that they consider there is a need for more flexible working or childcare provision to help people in work. This rose to 74% among respondents living in a regeneration area. It is also higher among female (74%) than male (64%) respondents.

6. What are the most important issues for you in relation to services and employment?

The most important issues were:

Health	80%
Transport	79%
Being safe in your community	72%
Educational Opportunities	64%
Childcare & Flexible working	38%

There were no significant differences between the priorities chosen by men and women.

People's Panel Survey 2006

An analysis of the People's Panel survey carried out in summer 2006, however, indicates that there were some differences in the views of male and female respondents in relation to questions about being safe in their community. This 2006 survey examined these issues in some depth.

The survey findings indicated that:

- More women (55%) than men (42%) felt either fairly unsafe or very unsafe alone in their neighbourhood after dark.
- More women (65%) than men (56%) were very or slightly worried about being robbed
- There were significantly more women (33%) than men (19%) either very or slightly worried about being sexually assaulted or raped
- Women also tended to be more worried about being physically attacked by strangers; being insulted or pestered in a public place; being subject to a physical attack; and about race related crime.

These findings are consistent with other national findings in the Gender Audit report (2007) by the Scottish Executive and have relevance for Council services such as Property Services.

6.5 Gender Based Violence

The People's Panel survey carried out in Spring 2007 also included questions regarding domestic abuse. This was done to obtain some local information on the prevalence of such violence.

Strathclyde Police have reported that incidents of domestic abuse reported to them are relatively high for North Ayrshire and are steadily increasing. Through the Community Planning Partnership the Police supported an awareness raising campaign in 2006 in order to tackle this issue.

The People's Panel survey 2007 asked:

1. Have you had experience of domestic abuse?

(Domestic Abuse was defined as including physical, sexual and emotional abuse within an intimate relationship)

Respondents were asked if they had experience of such abuse personally, or of domestic abuse affecting a member of their family or a friend.

In total 8% of all respondents said that they had personal experience of domestic abuse. This rose to 11% of female respondents and dropped to 4% of the male respondents. Overall, seventy two percent of respondents who stated they had personal experience of domestic abuse were female, with 28% being male.

In regeneration areas the total percentage of respondents who had personal experience of domestic abuse rose to 11% and in the rest of North Ayrshire it fell to 6%. These figures are again roughly consistent with other national findings about women being the main victims of domestic abuse. For example, the Scottish Executive's Gender Audit report found that

in 2005 85% of domestic abuse victims were female and 11% male.

Respondents with experience of domestic abuse in North Ayrshire

	Yes	No
Male	4%	96%
Female	11%	89%
Total	8%	92%
Rest of North Ayrshire	6%	94%
Regeneration Areas	11%	89%

The Survey also asked about the main organisations respondents would seek help from if they experienced domestic abuse. These were as follows:

Police	59%
Women's Aid	25%
Doctor	22%
Victim Support	21%
Social services	17%

The survey asked for views on what action should be taken to tackle domestic abuse. Fifteen percent of respondents believed that longer jail terms and tougher sentencing should be implemented. This was followed by more help for victims (11%) and better education (6%).

The North Ayrshire Domestic Abuse Forum is developing a new strategy and action plan to address violence against women in North Ayrshire over the next three years. Its actions will have important links to this scheme.

A consultation was held in Spring 2007 with women who have experienced domestic abuse on the proposals in the Violence Against Women action plan. Useful information was obtained on their concerns about the response they received from services, and about the continuing fear and stigma they experience. The need to promote preventative work with young people and

to consider the impact of abuse on them was also highlighted.

In response to a question during this consultation about gender equality issues for the Council, the issue of the need for equal pay was raised. This is dealt with in the section on the Equal Pay statement.

6.6 Household Survey 2004

Another method of establishing the views of service male and female users has been an analysis of the Council's Household Survey. This was carried out in 2004 and involved a postal questionnaire being sent to all of the 60,000 households in North Ayrshire. The purpose of the survey was to establish residents' knowledge of Council services, their satisfaction with them, areas for improvement and future priority, their experience of contacting the Council, and their overall view of it.

There was no significant disparity by gender in the responses to this survey and no pronounced gender effects in the pattern of responses. The only slight difference found was in terms of satisfaction, where women tended to be slightly more satisfied than men with council services. The top improvement priority identified for council services was improving road and pavement maintenance and street cleaning and this was consistent across gender, income groups, age groups and areas of residence.

The top three priorities for the Council were identified as

- Improving employment opportunities
- Ensuring streets and other open spaces are litter free and
- Encouraging more businesses to move into the area.

There were no major gender differences identifiable in determining these priorities. From this Household Survey it has not been possible to distinguish any significant difference in the views of men and women towards Council services. The Household Survey will be carried out again in 2007 and this report will also be analysed for any gender differences in the responses received.

6.7 Women's Network

In 1997 the Council established a Women's Network which aimed to address significant issues for women in North Ayrshire both as employees and as customers. This was done in recognition of the gender inequalities which exist for women. The Network was made up of female representatives from each Council Service. It considered issues such as management training for women, childcare provision, the need for flexible working, the gender pay gap, access to Council services, etc. It also had a significant role in promoting an annual women's conference.

There was a considerable amount of useful information gathered from these events on the issues for women in North Ayrshire. These issues included:

- Poverty
- Education
- Community and personal safety
- Flexible working
- Childcare
- Health – stress, depression, breast screening
- Transport

The remit of the Women's Network has now been incorporated into that of the Corporate Equality Officers Group but a number of the issues which it considered are still relevant and have been used to inform this scheme.

These are also reflected in the findings of national research, including the Scottish Executive's recent report on "A Gender Audit of Statistics: Comparing the Position of Women and Men in Scotland" (2007). The information in this report has been used throughout this scheme in benchmarking local statistics against national ones.

In relation to each of the above issues raised through the Women's Network, this report found statistical evidence that:

- Women's levels of income are persistently lower than men's and that women are more vulnerable to poverty
- Girls perform better than boys at school but this educational attainment does not continue on into higher paid jobs.
- Men are more likely to be victims of violent crime while women are overwhelmingly the victims of domestic violence, and of crimes of indecency such as rape
- There remain significant differences between men and women in patterns of labour market participation, including in the use of flexible forms of working. Opportunities have opened up for women but there remain barriers, such as their concentration in low paid part time jobs, and occupational segregation.
- Women take the major share of responsibility for childcare, whether as unpaid carers or as paid workers.
- Women continue to have greater life expectancy than men although over time the gap in the average life expectancy of men and women has decreased

- Men drive more frequently than women do and women are more likely to use bus services.

This evidence of the national differences between men and women can be used, together with other information available, to develop appropriate measures to try to address the inequalities highlighted. It is clear, however, from the national trends that any change is likely to be relatively gradual. The Gender Audit concludes that the cause of gender inequality is complex and is inter-related with socio-economic status, ethnicity and disability.

6.8 Consultation with Young People

There has been a wide range of consultation with boys and girls on a number of issues and this has included use of the Young Scot website. This is referred to in the Education gender equality scheme.

6.9 Consultation with Transsexuals

It has not been possible to engage locally with transsexuals in North Ayrshire for consultation purposes. The Scottish Executive, however, has supported the establishment of the Scottish Transgender Alliance to gain a better understanding of the needs of transgender men and women. It found that in order to tackle discrimination and prejudice against transsexual people, the areas which should be considered include:

- Access to and experience of services, particularly single sex services;
- Attitudes towards transgender men and women
- Training
- A lack of research on Scottish transgender issues

6.10 Consultation with the Ethnic Minority Community

Through the Ayrshire Race Equality Partnership the Council's Black and Ethnic Minority Worker co-ordinated a major needs assessment survey of the local ethnic minority population in Ayrshire during 2005. The population in North Ayrshire comprises 924 residents, 0.7% of the population, with the predominant ethnic groups being Chinese and Indian.

The survey identified gender issues for the Muslim community in their preference for single sex facilities such as swimming pool and gym facilities. There has also been an issue raised regarding access to the Cantonese interpreting service and the number of men accessing this service. These matters are being addressed through the Council's Race Equality Scheme and Action Plan which is linked to this scheme. In seeking to address gender equality, the complexity of the disadvantage faced by particular groups also needs to be taken into account.

6.11 Consultation with Disabled People

The Council undertook a wide range of consultation with disabled men and women in conjunction with the preparation of its Disability Equality Scheme. This included a questionnaire survey completed by members of the Disabled Women's Network (DAWN) and a consultation meeting with the Deaf Women's Club. There were also focus groups held in different areas with disabled people from different age groups.

The issues for disabled people raised through their involvement in developing the Disability Equality Scheme are also linked to this Gender Equality Scheme.

7. Priority Objectives

From all of the consultation and information gathering carried out, evidence has been provided which demonstrates the priority issues for North Ayrshire Council in relation to gender equality. This section indicates the key issues raised and how the Council will respond to them. It will not be possible to address all gender inequalities over the three year period of the Scheme but the Council is taking steps to address the most significant issues identified in preparing it. It will continue to make progress in fulfilling its duty to promote gender equality in future years.

The action plan attached to this Scheme describes in detail the Council's proposals to promote gender equality in the priority areas identified. The purpose of the Scheme is to bring about change. The Action Plan therefore contains the outcomes which the Council seeks to achieve and the supporting actions indicating how it will go about achieving them.

The overall priority objectives for the Council are included in this section of the scheme.

7.1 Employment

The main issues raised for the Council as an employer were in relation to job segregation, work/life balance, and equal pay

The Council will:

- Work towards eliminating any actual or perceived gender bias in its pay and grading structures
- Pilot an exercise to reduce job segregation in Educational, Property and Social Services
- Continue to promote and review its work life balance policy

- Promote the recently introduced child care voucher scheme to all employees
- Distribute an information booklet to all employees to heighten awareness of the Council's Equality policies
- Deliver equal opportunity training to employees and mainstream gender equality issues into its training courses
- Incorporate equality issues within its proposed Management Development Training programme

7.2 Housing

The main issues raised for Housing Services related to homelessness, community safety and violence against women

The Council will:

- Develop a Housing Equal Opportunities Policy and a Harassment Policy to address any harassment on the basis of gender, as well as other forms of discrimination
- Support Women's Aid in providing refuge and assistance for women and children experiencing domestic abuse
- Develop the Violence against Women strategy and action plan to tackle gender based violence

7.3 Social Services

The main issues raised for Social Services related to access to elderly care services and to personal care

The Council will:

- Review its elderly care services for men and women in relation to gender issues
- Ensure that staff of the same gender will be available to offer personal care if this is requested

The Council's actions relating to Education are referred to separately in the relevant section of the scheme, as are its Equal Pay Policy Statement and its Education Equal Pay Policy Statement.

8. Gathering and Using Information

The Council will gather and use information on how women and men are affected by its activities. This will be important in deciding on its gender equality priorities for the future. It will also be useful in assisting with equality impact assessments and in monitoring the Council's progress generally. This information will be both quantitative and qualitative, drawing from a range of sources from across the Council.

The specific duties require that the Council gather information on the effect of its policies and practices on men and women, and in particular on:

- The extent to which they promote equality between male and female staff; and
- The extent to which the services it provides and the functions it performs take account of the needs of men and women.

The Council has considered the national gender equality issues highlighted by the Scottish Executive's Gender Audit report (2007) and various related policy documents and schemes, including the Executive's Gender Equality Scheme. It has used this information, together with the local information gathered on gender equality issues in North Ayrshire, to identify the information it will gather in order to meet the gender equality duty.

In relation to its activities as an employer, the Council will make arrangements for the monitoring in the future of the number of male and female employees who: -

- Are subject to disciplinary action and incapability procedures
- Have raised a grievance
- Receive training
- Apply for employment, are shortlisted and are successful
- Apply for promotion

In addition, the Council will gather and use information on gender in:

- Job Application forms
- A bi-annual employee check (workforce survey) and equal opportunities survey
- Scottish Executive returns on employee numbers which provide an analysis of employee numbers and reasons for increases and decrease of over 5%
- Statutory performance indicators on:
 - % of women in the top 5% and 2% of highest earners
 - % of Head and Depute Head teachers who are women compared to % of all teachers who are women
- employees on flexible working arrangements.

In relation to its services and functions, the Council will gather a range of information on men and women.

In Housing Services this will be gathered on:

- Homelessness applicants for housing. This information will be used to assess the most suitable type and location of accommodation, as well as any housing support which may be needed
- Housing applicants. This information will be used to establish points, e.g. for overcrowding
- All housing tenants and housing waiting lists applicants

In Social Services this information will be gathered:

- For single shared assessments for community care
- For child assessment reports
- For criminal justice criminal inquiry reports
- On people who are blind and partially sighted
- On people living in residential homes and using day care establishments
- On people receiving home care services; and
- On adults with learning disabilities.

The information to be gathered by Educational Services is referred to within the Education Scheme.

The Council will ensure that there is appropriate disaggregation of the statistical and other information it collects from all relevant exercises in the future. This will be analysed and used to identify any change in the pattern of use of services by men and women. Action can then be taken to address any imbalance.

9. Impact Assessment

The Council has piloted and approved, through the former Corporate Policy Committee, an Equality Impact Assessment process. A toolkit and form has been distributed and published on its website to assist services to ensure when developing policies and delivering services that the Council is not discriminating against men or women, as well as other equality groups. Its aim is to take proportionate action to ensure all policies eliminate discrimination and harassment and adapt them to promote gender and other forms of equality.

The toolkit advises on how to carry out an equality impact assessment and provides guidance on this process. It includes guidance on each of the seven stages involved and is accompanied by an assessment form to be used when reporting on the outcome of the assessment.

The purpose of the equality impact assessment process is to:

- Improve the quality of the Council's services to make sure that they are accessible to everyone
- Identify any possible discrimination or other inequalities which may exist and means of overcoming these
- Help to develop good practice and positive ways of ensuring that the Council meets the needs of all its communities.

The process has been designed so that services consider all impacts of a policy or activity at the one time. This integrated approach was considered to be the most effective way that impacts could be taken into account for gender and in respect of other equality groups.

The equality impact assessment must address the specific needs of:

- Ethnic minority people
- Disabled people
- Women and men
- Older people, children and young people
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people
- People from different religious or faith groups

The relevance of gender equality will be higher for some policies and functions than for others and in these circumstances care will be taken to ensure that this Council is meeting its general duty and that this can be demonstrated. Specific attention will be given to developing the information available on gender differences and to ensuring effective analysis of the implications for gender equality in the impact assessments carried out.

Equality impact assessment is a screening process which should allow for any issues affecting men or women to be identified at an early stage and for these to be given more detailed examination. This will be done through further research, data analysis and consultation.

Equality impact assessments are carried out on all new policies, practices, functions and strategies and all policies, functions and strategies being reviewed. Links to equality impact assessment are included in the guidance for services on implementing strategic service reviews so that this is built into their regular review process.

It is a process that in future should promote the mainstreaming of equal opportunities into all of the Council's activities and should become a natural part of service planning.

Training on how to take forward equality impact assessments has been delivered through the University of Paisley to senior managers in all services of the Council.

The process is in its early stages of implementation and will change and evolve over the next three years. It will be subject to regular reviews and the guidance will be amended to reflect any changes required. The findings of each assessment will be reported in the Council's Annual Equality report.

10. Employment

The Council employs people in a wide variety of occupations which are categorised into four employment groups, namely: -

- Chief Officers which comprise of Directors, Assistant Chief Executives and Heads of Service
- Local Government Employees (ie former APT&C, former Manual Workers and Locally agreed grades) which comprise of those in managerial, supervisory, professional, administrative/clerical and manual occupations
- Craft Operatives which comprise employees engaged in building trades and vehicle maintenance
- Teachers who comprise of Head and Deputy Head Teachers and all grades of teaching staff employed in schools-based education. The Council employs Teaching staff within the Primary, Secondary and Special Schools sectors.

Analysis of the workforce at 31 March 2007 (unless otherwise noted)

Subject	Male (%)	Female (%)	Remarks
Total of Council employees	29	71	
Chief Officials	61	39	
Local Government Employees - Council	29	71	
- Clerical (GS grades)	9	91	
- former Manual Workers	22	78	
- Administrative (AP grades)	26	74	
- Principal Officer (PO grades)	50	50	
Local Agreement employees	47	53	
Craft Operatives	99	1	
Teaching staff (incl Heads/Depute Heads) - Council	23	77	
- Secondary sector	38	62	SPI based at Sept 2006
- Primary Sector	6	94	SPI based at Sept 2006
- Special Needs sector	19	81	SPI based at Sept 2006
- Head/Depute Head teachers	35	65	SPI based at Sept 2006
Part-Time – Council	6	94	Part-time employees make up 32% of the
Part-Time – Local Government Employees & Craft Operatives	5	95	Part-time employees make up 42% of LG
Part-time – Teaching staff	5	95	Part-time employees make up 28% of Teaching
Fixed Term – Local Government Employees & Craft Operatives	29	71	
Fixed Term - Teaching	20	80	
Home Care employees	3	97	
Residential	26	74	
Catering	1	99	
Cleaning	3	97	
Children's Services (including Nursery Services)	2	98	
Technical Grades	84	16	
Employees with dependants (children under 6 years of age/dependant adults - Council	27	73	2006 Workforce Survey - 40% of total workforce
Maternity Leave returners	-	100	33% returned to reduced hours working

There is evidence of job segregation in a number of the Council's services: -

Women predominate in:-

- Residential Care (74%)
- Teaching - Special Needs Education (81%)
- Clerical grades (91%)
- Teaching - Primary Education (94%)
- Home Care (97%)

- Cleaning Services (97%)
- Children's Services (including Nursery Services) (98%)
- Catering Services (99%)

Men predominate in:-

- Technical grades (84%)
- Craft Operative grades (99%)

Pay data for the year 2006/07

Subject	Male	Female	Remarks
Top 2% of earners that are men/women (excluding Teaching staff)	68.50%	31.50%	SPI
Top 5% of earners that are men/women (excluding Teaching staff)	56.50%	43.50%	SPI
Average Full-time equivalent hourly pay rates – all staff	£12.64	£10.87	Pay gap = 14%*
Average Full-time equivalent hourly pay rates – Local Government Employees	£10.67	£8.57	Pay gap = 20%*
Average Full-time equivalent hourly pay rates – Teaching staff	£19.09	£17.34	Pay gap = 9%*

* Average for Scotland is 12% (source: Scottish Executive Gender Audit 2007).

Recruitment, Training & Turnover during 2006/07 (all staff)

Subject	Men(%)	Women(%)	Remarks
Employees applying for promotion	79	21	
All applicants applying for advertised job vacancies	45	52	3% did not declare
Of those men applying, those shortlisted for interview	36	-	
Of those men shortlisted, those appointed	38	-	
Of those women applying, those shortlisted for interview	-	62	
Of those women shortlisted, those appointed	-	60	
Employees receiving training	37	67	
Resigning from the Council	27	73	

Discipline and grievance

Grievances submitted (except Equal Pay)

Grievances submitted (except Equal Pay)	33	67
Equal Pay Grievances	9	91
Disciplined under Council Procedure	71	29

Job Segregation

Job segregation exists in a number of areas and this merits further examination and steps taken to encourage greater gender balance. This can be related to the traditional male/female roles that still exist within society in general.

The high incidence of female part-time and fixed term employees is a reflection of the needs of some of the Council's workforce and also that women predominantly have the family care role.

Achieving a gender balance in professional and managerial roles is not only an issue of supply and demand but also one of education and training.

Equal Pay grievances are a reflection of the current position within the public sector.

Pay and Conditions of Employment

Setting annual pay awards for chief officers, craft operatives and local government employees takes place with the appropriate trade unions on a national basis. Determination of conditions of employment also takes place on a national basis but it should be noted that for local government employees, much is devolved to the Council and local trade unions. Local consultation between the Council and local government employees and craft operatives on matters not affecting pay and conditions of employment take place at a Council level through the Local Joint Co-ordinating Committee.

Determination of pay and terms and conditions of employment for teachers is also decided at national level. Local consultation and negotiation on implementation of national conditions and other matters of common interest takes place between the Council and teaching staff representatives through the Local

basis but it should be noted that for local government employees, much is devolved to the Council and local trade unions. Local consultation between the Council and local government employees and craft operatives on matters not affecting pay and conditions of employment take place at a Council level through the Local Joint Co-ordinating Committee.

Determination of pay and terms and conditions of employment for teachers is also decided at national level. Local consultation and negotiation on implementation of national conditions and other matters of common interest takes place between the Council and teaching staff representatives through the Local Negotiating Committee, the remit for which is determined at National level.

The Council and the Local Government Trade Unions are currently engaged in discussions to implement the Scottish Joint Council Agreement on Single Status. An equality impact assessment has been carried out on the proposed job evaluation scheme.

The Council and the Craft Unions are currently engaged in discussions on Modernising Working Practices and Pay and Grading Systems

The Council has implemented the McCrone report on Teaching in the 21st Century which deals with pay systems and terms and conditions of employment.

The EOC for Scotland has been conducting an enquiry into the role and status of classroom assistants and has now published its findings. The Council took part in the enquiry and will be assessing any implications the report may have for their 407 classroom assistants, of whom 98% are women.

10.2 Training and Employee Development

The Council has an Equality Awareness Training Programme for its Directors, Managers and employees. The programme is nearing completion for existing staff who were prioritised for this training and will continue as a regular employee development course for all staff. The training is designed to ensure a strategic level awareness for Directors and Heads of Service and for managers on their role as an employer and as a service provider. It addresses the legislative and operational aspects of discrimination in the workplace. The objective is that consideration of equality issues becomes mainstreamed into all areas of the Council's work.

The Council encourages employees to develop their knowledge, skills and abilities through the Post Entry Training Scheme by attending courses in further and higher education. There is also a Learning and Development Programme which is open to all employees. This programme provides a number of People Management and Personal Development courses, some of which have a direct bearing on equality issues such as Equalities Awareness, Leadership, Coaching, Assertiveness, Work Life Balance and Recruitment and Selection.

The induction training delivered to all new employees highlights the importance of equal opportunities in employment and the employees' responsibilities under the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

The Council has adapted its training to take account of the work-life balance requirements of unemployed adults participating as trainees on its Training for Work programme. Most of these trainees (95%) are women and most can only attend on a part-time basis. Course times

have been altered to accommodate the trainees' requirements.

Teaching staff training is undertaken through courses that mainly concentrate on curricular activities and a number of the available courses do have an equalities content. In addition, teaching staff are required to undertake 35 hours per annum of Continuing Personal Development which includes the courses noted above, other areas agreed with the Head Teacher, and areas of personal development. The five in-service days per annum for each school may also include an equalities theme.

An information booklet is being prepared for issue to all employees with the aim of increasing awareness of equality issues.

10.3 Policies and Procedures

The Council has Personnel Policies and Procedures that deal with equality issues and which put in place processes to enable and support the goal of equality. All new and revised policies and procedures are subject to consultation with the trade unions.

Equal Opportunities

The Equal Opportunities Policy referred to in Section 3.2 covers both employment and service delivery. The Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) implements, maintains, monitors and reviews the policy in relation to equal opportunities in employment. He also has responsibility for training and guidance on the effective operation of the policy in this regard.

The Corporate Directors, Assistant Chief Executives and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring equality of opportunity is applied and practised within their service. They are responsible for ensuring that their employees are aware of the implications of the Policy, their

obligations under the law, and that their managers, supervisors and staff are given the relevant training.

Employees have a duty to comply with the Policy, to deliver Council services in a fair and equitable way, and to assist in making the working environment free from discrimination.

Recruitment and Selection

The Council recruits permanent, temporary, fixed term, part-time employees and casual workers and the recruitment and selection procedures are designed to prevent discrimination in the selection of employees. Applicants are asked to complete an equal opportunities monitoring form which includes the applicant's gender.

Within each appointment letter, there is a clear statement that the Council will not tolerate discriminatory behaviour by its employees and that any such instances will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

New and Expectant Mothers at Work

The Guidance Notes, which implement the European Directive on Pregnant Workers, give guidance on assessment of risks to new and expectant mothers and on what is reasonably practicable to control these risks, once the appropriate manager has been notified in writing of the pregnancy.

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct, which has been sent to all existing employees, is sent to all new employees. The Code sets out the standards expected from employees. This includes a requirement to treat all employees and to deal with the public equitably and fairly, in accordance with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Disciplinary Rules

The Disciplinary Rules, which have been sent to all existing employees, are sent to all new employees. The Rules set out those acts which could lead to the employee being subject to the Council's Disciplinary Procedures. This includes serious breach of the Council's equal opportunities policy and other policies and procedures governing equal opportunities at work.

Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

The Disciplinary policy sets out the Council's policy framework on discipline. The Disciplinary procedures set out the process to be followed for dealing with employees against whom there are allegations of misconduct, the available penalties and the appeal process.

Grievance and Complaints Procedures

There is a core grievance procedure and other specific complaint procedures through which employees can raise grievances against alleged discriminatory practice, including the appeal stage.

Dignity and Respect at Work

The Council through this policy clearly states that it is committed to a working environment where all employees are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and have a right to form opinions. It also sets out values and expected behaviours and management and employee responsibilities to achieve a working environment free from discrimination. The procedure gives guidance on what constitutes harassment, including sex based and sexual harassment, bullying and victimisation. An employee who considers that he/she has been harassed, bullied or victimised can raise the matter in accordance with the complaints procedure.

Statutory and Special Leave

The Council provides and complies with all the statutory requirements on leave for Maternity, Adoption, Paternity and family care provision. In addition, special leave for family care has been extended beyond the minimum provision in law.

Child Care Vouchers

The Council provides employees with the facility to enrol in the child care vouchers scheme which takes advantage of the tax and NI concessions available through Government enactment. The scheme is managed by Busy Bees.

Work Life Balance Policy and Procedure

The Council embraces the concept of flexible working through its Work Life Balance Policy which provides for 10 varying forms of work pattern. This policy also incorporates the statutory procedures for care of children and dependant adults.

The Council has carried out two Work Life Balance surveys in 2002 and 2006 to obtain information on employees' views on work-life balance, which includes flexible working.

The more recent survey found that since the Work Life Balance Policy was introduced in 2005 10% of employees responding had requested it and 8% now believe that they work more flexibly. The actual figures show that 2% (144) of employees had requested to work flexibly by February 2007 and 0.05% (4) applications had been declined. This tends to be in the form of compressed hours, home-working, term-time hours, or working part-time.

In relation to working flexibly, 65% of respondents were happy with the hours they work and 48% indicated that they could adjust their working hours to deal

with personal situations. There were 31% of respondents, however, who could not do this.

In terms of flexible working options, 50% said they were fully informed of all the options available to them, with 25% not fully informed.

The findings of this survey were addressed by Personnel Services and these issues were also raised within the Employee Focus Groups. A review has been carried out and the policy has now been amended. It will continue to be promoted to employees and to be monitored as part of the Council's commitment to working towards gender equality.

10.4 Reviewing Policies and Procedures

The Council reviews its policies and procedures on a regular basis. It assesses these against legislative enactment, best practice, emerging case law and where appropriate, will create new or amend existing policies and procedures.

Framework for Monitoring

The Council has a Computerised Human Resource Information System (CHRIS) which records personal, staffing and training details of their employees and applicants for vacant positions.

The Council will monitor those affected by the undernoted activities by reference to their sex, including:-

- The composition of the workforce, including numbers of full time and part time employees
- The recruitment process (applications, shortlisted candidates and successful candidates)
- Employee applications for promotion

- Employees receiving training
- Employees raising a grievance
- Employees who are the subject of disciplinary action
- Employees terminating their employment
- Employees who benefit or suffer detriment as a result of its performance assessment procedures (Chief Officers only)
- Employees applying/changing working arrangements under the work life balance policy
- Employees participating in the Child Care Voucher Scheme
- Average full time equivalent hourly pay rates

The Council also undertakes other monitoring as part of its annual reporting on Statutory Performance Indicators of: -

- The number and percentage of the highest paid 2% and 5% of its employees who are women
- The number and percentage of head and deputy head teachers who are women, compared with the percentage of all teachers who are women.

The Council obtains information on the sex of applicants through the completion and return of a confidential equal opportunities questionnaire.

The Council also undertakes a bi-annual data check and equal opportunities survey of its staff which includes their gender. The Council encourages all staff to participate in giving the necessary information in order to support the provision of all-inclusive and representative data. The next survey will be undertaken in Autumn 2008.

In addition, the Council will also monitor other relevant employment data to assist in identifying gender issues within the workforce.

Results of Monitoring

The Council will publish the results arising out of the statutory monitoring and the voluntary monitoring of its staff in the Annual Equalities Report. Details will also be published on the Council's web-site

The Council will analyse the results of the monitoring for-

- Patterns of inequality, and
- Non-disclosure patterns within the workforce survey

and will take whatever action is deemed appropriate in the circumstances.

11. Equal Pay Policy Statement (excluding Teaching staff)

The Council is committed to the principle of equal pay for all our employees and it is our objective to eliminate any bias in our pay systems in keeping with the statutory right of men and women to equal pay.

The Council is party to the Scottish Joint Council for Local Government Employees Single Status Package agreement of July 1999 which committed to a single set of terms and conditions of employment for former Manual Workers and former APT&C staff. This included an agreement to develop and implement a Council wide job evaluation scheme for such employees. The Council have fully involved the trade unions in the development of this agreement and the job evaluation scheme.

The Council is also in discussions with the Trade Unions who represent Craft Operatives on Modernising Working Practices and Pay and Grading Systems

We have, therefore, been working with the Trade Unions to achieve the elimination of any bias that may exist within the current pay systems.

The Council will:-

- Continue to work towards the implementation of a job evaluation scheme in keeping with our jointly agreed commitments
- Provide training and guidance for those involved in determining pay
- Inform employees of how these practices work and how their own pay is determined
- Respond to grievances on equal pay timeously
- Monitor pay statistics annually
- Conduct an Equal Pay Audit every 3 years

12. Education Gender Equality Scheme

12.1 Introduction

It is essential that there is a shared understanding of the complexity of gender differences in education and that there should not be a simplistic focus on the under-achievement of boys. Some girls are under-achieving, just as some boys are doing well at school. The following bullet points provide some illustration of the complexity of the implementation of Gender Equality Duty in Education:

- the notion of boys' underachievement is based on an average: not all boys are underachieving and not all girls are doing well;
- there are persistent and marked differences in attainment for both sexes by social class background;
- patterns of school attainment vary for girls and boys from different ethnic backgrounds;
- there are gender differences in assignment to learning and behaviour support;
- there are gender and social class differences in performance from pre-school onwards;
- there are gender differences in uptake and attainment in different subjects across the curriculum;
- there are continuing disadvantages for females in education and beyond.

Inclusion: a gender perspective, Tinklan et al, Edinburgh 2003

Some researchers have suggested that it is more appropriate to think in terms of a 'gender jigsaw' rather than a 'gender gap'. It is therefore important that there is a recognition of the need to challenge stereotyped attitudes rather than reinforce

them and in particular any form of over-simplistic solution should be avoided.

In the light of the complexity of the issues, Educational Services will adopt a co-ordinated multi-pronged approach to tackling gender differences in schools, nurseries and in other services provided by Education.

12.2 Equalities Working Group

A working group, with representation from all sectors in Educational Services, has been set up to provide strategic leadership in the implementation of the Gender Equality Duty. This group conducted an initial 'screening' exercise on all Educational Services Standard Circulars in order to prioritise those policies which require a more detailed impact assessment.

The process of impact assessment commenced with those authority policies which were considered of high relevance to the equalities agenda including school dress code, school attendance, sexual health education and anti-bullying.

In addition, the group has also conducted a full-scale impact assessment of primary school education, which provides a sound basis for further action within the authority. The impact assessment examined the following data differentiated according to gender:

- attendance statistics
- exclusion statistics
- attainment; and
- results of a pupil survey known as PASS (Pupil Attitudes to Self and School).

There was no significant gender difference in school attendance across the 53 primary schools. However, boys were significantly under-achieving in national tests and were much more likely to be excluded from school in comparison with girls in the same year groups. In session

2005/06, in 42 out of the total 53 primary schools, girls performed either better or significantly better than boys in reading tests. The gender difference is even more marked in writing assessments, where girls outperformed boys in 46 of the 53 primary schools. The gender difference is not as pronounced in mathematics. In 2005/06, in 18 schools boys either achieved higher or significantly higher levels than girls.

In North Ayrshire primary schools, boys are much more likely to be excluded than girls. Only 30 of the 53 primary schools had exclusion incidents in 2005/06, but in 27 of these boys were excluded more than girls. Over all schools the average number of exclusion incidents involving girls was 3.8 per 1000 pupils but the corresponding figure for boys was 35 per 1000 pupils.

This impact assessment has provided the authority with sound baseline data for primary schools on which to monitor the outcomes of planned interventions. Over the next session, similar impact assessment will be undertaken for secondary and special schools.

12.3 Consultation

From research literature and based on local data, the following issues have been identified as priorities for implementing the Gender Equality Duty in schools, nurseries and other parts of Educational Services.

1. Attainment in Primary School
2. Exclusions from Primary Schools.
3. Staffing in Nurseries.
4. Childcare and Out of School Care.
5. Attainment in National Qualifications.
6. Exclusions from Secondary Schools.
7. Subject Choices in Secondary Schools.

-
8. Work Experience.
 9. Careers Education.
 10. Participation in Sport & Physical Activity.

A consultation exercise will be undertaken to decide the order in which these issues are tackled. There will also be an opportunity to identify other areas where there is a perceived gender issue. This consultation exercise will involve key stakeholders including children and young people, their parents and staff employed in the delivery of Educational Services. Questionnaires have already been issued to all schools in the authority to encourage children and young people to participate.

In addition, two consultation events (one for primary pupils and one for young people from secondary schools) have been organised for September 2007. An interactive drama company has been hired to provide a stimulus to the debate at these consultation events. Parents will be consulted through the newly formed Parent Councils.

12.4 Implementation

In session 2007/08, the Equalities Working Group will be responsible for collection of further baseline data to inform the implementation process. The Group will also organise a series of training events in preparation for the next phase. The results of the impact assessment exercises will be shared with heads of establishments in order to provide a body of evidence to support implementation across all sectors.

In session 2008/09 and 2009/10 schools and other establishments will be expected to include specific targets relating to Gender Equality Duty in their development plans and will be required to monitor the progress and an annual report to the authority on progress towards meeting the

implementation targets and measurable outcomes.

All schools, nurseries and other educational establishments and services will be required to compile a written policy on gender equality. The Equalities Working Group will provide support and guidance to schools to assist them with this exercise. Schools will submit a written policy to their designated Quality Improvement Officer/Manager by December 2008.

The authority will play an active role in the development of strategies to address gender inequalities. It will be subsumed into other educational developments such as the Learning and Teaching Policy, A Curriculum for Excellence, Health Promoting Schools and Active Schools. The Quality Improvement Service will mainstream gender issues into the agendas of visits to schools. The authority will arrange a number of courses as part of the Continuing Professional Development of teachers, classroom assistants and other professionals involved in the delivery of education.

Schools will be issued with a toolkit for gender equality to support Head Teachers in the process of self-evaluation and development planning. In addition, the Quality Improvement Service will support schools on their implementation of the equalities agenda in preparation for HMI visits and as part of the post inspection Follow Through process.

13. Equal Pay Policy Statement (Educational Services)

The Council is committed to the principle of equal pay for all our employees and it is our objective to eliminate any bias in our pay systems in keeping with the statutory right of men and women to equal pay.

The salaries and grading for teaching staff are determined nationally at the Scottish National Committee for Teachers. The Council's Teaching staff are paid in accordance with such agreements reached between the employers' and Trade Unions representatives on the Scottish National Committee for Teachers. The Council has implemented the McCrone report on Teaching in the 21st Century which deals with pay systems and terms and conditions of employment.

The Council:-

- Has informed employees of how these pay and grading practices work and how their own pay is determined
- Will respond to grievances on equal pay timeously
- Will monitor pay statistics annually
- Will conduct an Equal Pay Audit every 3 years

14. Procurement

The Council is involved in contracting with a wide range of private companies and other organisations in carrying out works or providing goods, services or staff. It will ensure through its corporate governance procedures that it will meet the general and specific duties when any of the Council's functions or services are carried out by a private company or voluntary organisation under a contract or other agreement.

The Council's Standing Orders for Contract require that when tendering and contracting with third parties, the Council will comply with the current legislation relating to equal opportunity.

Its Procurement Strategy recognises the importance of this within its strategic aim on supplier management. This indicates that the Council will support local supply bases subject to UK and EU legislation and in support of the Council's corporate and community aims. These aims include promoting equality.

The Council's Invitation to Tender document incorporates a requirement on suppliers to confirm that they are complying with their statutory duties in ensuring equal opportunity in employment and in service delivery. The invitation includes an equal opportunities certificate which must be signed and returned with the bid to tender.

The Council's Procurement Steering Group has considered the equality implications of its work in early 2007 in conjunction with a presentation on equality and procurement issues.

15. Partnerships

The Council works in partnership with a wide range of partners in order to deliver its services, including partners in the business and voluntary sector as well as other public bodies and agencies.

It is the lead partner on the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership Board and will ensure that gender equality is given due regard in its activities. Equality is one of the Partnership's seven shared priorities and gender equality is incorporated into its Action Plan. This will ensure that it takes forward work to promote gender equality, particularly in relation to the development and monitoring of Regeneration Outcome Agreements initiatives.

In all of its partnership working the Council will ensure that gender equality is taken forward and is mainstreamed into all of its activities.

16. Monitoring and Review

The Council recognises the importance of having the relevant information available by gender in order to monitor effectively the impact of its policies and practices. This information is also vital in developing new policies and initiatives.

The Council is committed to developing this information resource over the next three years to obtain a better understanding of the needs of the people of North Ayrshire and of its own employees.

In relation to this Gender Equality Scheme, the Council will implement its actions for gathering and using information and for the objectives within the scheme.

These objectives are detailed in the attached Action Plan.

The Council will publish a report annually summarising the actions it has taken to implement the scheme's objectives. This will be published within its annual equality report.

The Annual Report will be published on the Council's website.

The Council will review and revise the scheme every three years. This will include a review of progress so that the Council continuously improves in its implementation of the new duty. To assist in this process, the Council will use information gathered, the results of equality impact assessments and feedback on this scheme.

By developing local actions to tackle and monitor gender inequality the Council will assist in contributing to tackling this issue and to bringing about positive change for everyone.

This Gender Equality Scheme can be provided in alternative formats, in Braille, audio CD and CD –ROM format. It is also available in other languages on request. It can be obtained from the Chief Executive's Office, Cunninghame House, Irvine, KA12 8EE Tel: 01294 324128

The Scheme is also available on the Council's website:

www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk