

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Resources Committee
09 June 2010

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Equal Opportunities update Report by Assistant Chief Executive

Summary

The Council's Programme aims to build a fairer and healthier Highland. This report updates members of the Council's progress in meeting its statutory public sector equality duties, presents a working draft of the Council's first Single Equality Scheme and updates members on the Equality Act 2010 and the Best Value 2 audit.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Highland Council aims to create sustainable communities with more balanced population growth and economic development across the Highlands and to build a fairer and healthier Highland. The Corporate Plan and Single Outcome Agreement reflect these aims and identify Equal Opportunities as a corporate priority, including targets to tackle discrimination, and to promote equality, participation and good relations.

1.3 There are currently 3 public sector equality duties covering Race, Disability and Gender. Each has a statutory 3 year review cycle and an annual reporting requirement. The timescales below also apply to duties on Education Authorities.

Scheme (introduced)	Current period	3 year review	Annual report
Race (2002)	2008 – 2011	30 Nov 2011	Employment monitoring
Disability (2006)	2006 – 2009	04 Dec 2009	Progress report
Gender (2007)	2007 - 2010	28 June 2010	Progress report

1.4 This report introduces a working draft of the Council's first Single Equality Scheme. It brings together the previous three schemes and begins to identify equality objectives for the newer protected characteristics which will be included in an integrated single equality duty on the public sector. It is intended to complete the draft in line with the new duty coming into force in April 2011 and will take account of new guidance and codes of practice being developed by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. This draft Single Equality Scheme is attached as Appendix 1 with additional information including appendices available [online](#) or full copies are available in the member's library.

1.5 Compliance with the public sector duties is enforced by a single Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) which was established in 2007 and replaces the Equal Opportunities Commission, The Commission for racial Equality and the Disability Rights Commission.

1.6 An equality scheme is expected to set out the equality priorities identified by a public body and their arrangements to meet a number of specific duties in order to meet overarching general duties to promote equality, eliminate discrimination and

promote good relations.

2 National Context: The Equality Bill

2.1 Between primary legislation and regulations there are presently over 100 statutes covering equal opportunities legislation. The [Equality Act 2010](#) gained royal assent on 8th April 2010. As different sections of the Act are gradually brought into force, the Act will replace all existing equality legislation. Until such time as the different sections of the Act are brought into force, existing equality legislation remains in force. It is intended that the provisions in the Act will come into force as follows:

- **October 2010:** Main provisions.
- **April 2011:** The integrated public sector Equality Duty, the Socio-economic Duty and dual discrimination protection.
- **2012:** The ban on age discrimination in provision of goods, facilities, services and public functions.
- **2013:** Private and voluntary sector gender pay transparency regulations (if required) and political parties publishing diversity data.

2.2 The main provisions of the Act will harmonise the existing discrimination law covering the 'protected characteristics' of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. It will also extend the scope of duties on the public sector and will introduce a Single Equality Duty on the public sector.

3 Best Value 2

3.1 The outcome of a Best Value 2 audit published on 13th May will be the subject of a report to Council in June. It identifies areas of good practice and for improvement. The implications of the recommendations for improvements around equalities will be reported to members in June.

4 Reviewing Progress

4.1 The Council's three equality schemes all broadly related to 5 key aims which will be carried forward to the single equality scheme. They are to:

- **Deliver accessible services and to treat customers fairly and with dignity and respect**
- **Ensure that our employment practices and policies are fair and accessible**
- **Increase engagement, involvement and representation of equality groups**
- **Create a culture in the Council that promotes equality, and demonstrates that discrimination and harassment on equality grounds will not be tolerated**
- **Demonstrate that the Council continues to meet its public sector duties.**

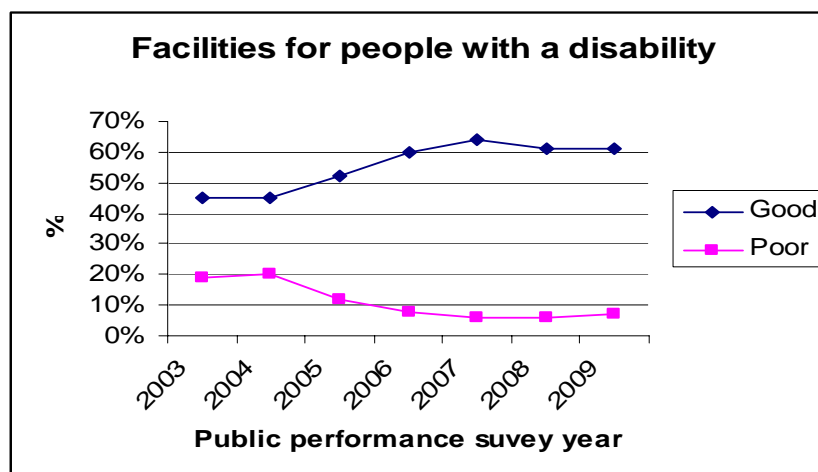
Progress against the action plan of the race, gender and disability schemes is detailed in the working draft scheme. Areas to highlight include:

4.2 **Deliver accessible services and to treat customers fairly and with dignity and respect**

- The Council has a target to ensure its public caller premises are accessible for disabled people as defined under the Audit Scotland Statutory Performance Indicator. In November 2009, 81% of premises were accessible, an improvement from 24.9% in 2006. This work is supported by identified resources and a continued programme of audits and planned improvements, and involves the local Disability Access Panels.
- The Council continues to provide and improve communication support for people who are Deaf and hard of hearing through its work with Deaf Action, the Deaf Communication Project and Deaf Services in Social Work
- The contract for provision of interpretation services for community languages was renewed in March 2009 and use of services continues to be monitored. Both use and costs of services have increased in the last 3 years:

Interpretation Services	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-2010
No of requests	108	232	329	608
Costs (£)	5,325	10,633	18,303	30,805

- During 2008-09, 1090 new learners were supported with English language tuition (ESOL) through partnership projects. This was an increase from 758 individuals being similarly supported in 2007-08.
- During 2008-09, 285 inward migrants and their families, who have limited English, were supported by Community Based Language Assistants to settle in to the Highlands.
- The Council's annual Public Performance Survey asks customers who had made contact with the Council about their satisfaction with facilities for people with a disability. This measure showed a significant improvement between 2004 and 2007, since when it has remained consistent.



- The Council's Programme is committed to secure an increase of 600 houses suitable for older people and people with disabilities. During 2008/09 119 units were completed bringing the total over the period of the plan to 431.

Ensure that our employment practices and policies are fair and accessible

- The Council has retained its award of the Positive About Disabled People "Two Ticks" symbol.
- Information collected from the Employee Survey has been analysed by age, disability, ethnicity and gender. Additionally, the Employee Surveys in 2007

and 2010 asked about perceptions of the Council as a fair employer and experiences of discrimination. Initial analysis in 2010 compared to 2007, shows that a smaller proportion of staff perceive that there are barriers to employment on equality grounds, and also that a smaller proportion report have felt disadvantaged at work on equality grounds.

- Since 2004, over 700 lead staff have attended Recruitment and Selection Training which includes equality requirements.
- Highland Council supports the Highland Diversity Awards organised by the Highland Employers Network and is a partner in the network

Equal Pay

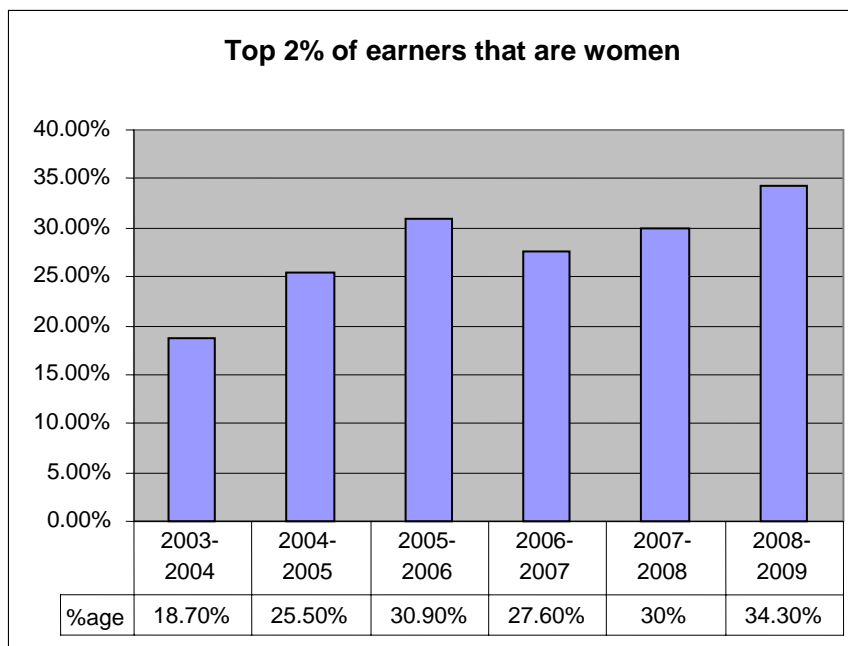
The Council has

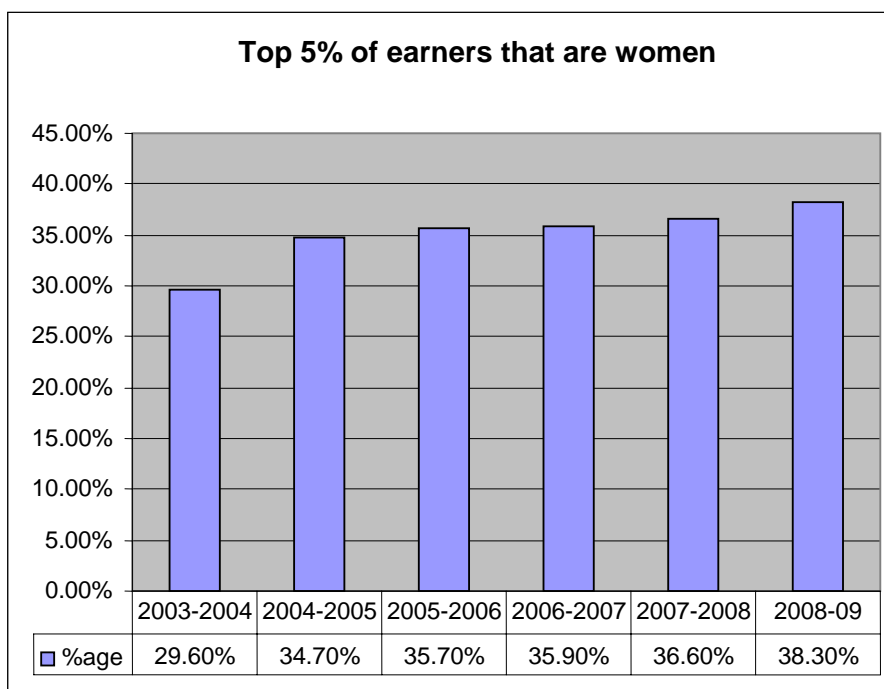
- Successfully implemented a revised pay strategy for employees covered by the Scottish Joint Council for Local Government Employees conditions of service that ensures equal pay for work of equal value.
- Achieved a successful external equality impact assessment of the new pay strategy in line with requirements of the 'Red Book' agreement (which covers single status and job evaluation for local government employees) and following the guidance issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission
- Achieved a successful external equality impact assessment of the proposed package of Harmonised and Non-Discriminatory Terms and Conditions for employees covered by the Scottish Joint Council for Local Government Employees conditions of service

There will be ongoing equal pay work to

- Apply the agreed job sizing arrangements for the grades and pay of teachers
- Harmonise and implement the pay and conditions of service for craft operatives
- Respond to equal pay claims against the Council
- Monitor pay statistics annually
- Review progress every three years

Statutory Performance indicators:





There continues to be an increase in the proportion of women in the highest paid posts in the Council. There has also been an improvement in the comparative ranking against other authorities in both instances.

Increase engagement, involvement and representation of equality groups

- Ward Forums are held in accessible venues
- A review has been undertaken of Polling stations towards ensuring accessible venues are used in elections.
- Ongoing commitment by Highland Council policy-makers to enter into dialogue with a range of equality groups in developing a strategy in the area of Community Care – Stakeholder Forums
- Development in Social Work of "[Good Practice Guide – Enabling Service User and Carer Participation](#)"
- Streetscape works in Inverness, Dingwall and Nairn have involved local Disability Access Panels.

A culture that will promote equality and tackle discrimination and harassment

- The 2008 and 2009 Public Performance Surveys have made much more detailed analysis of data by age, gender and disability and noted throughout the report where there are significant differences.
- With Community Planning Partners, development of an on-line reporting system and associated support to report and record Hate Incidents. Supporting activities included a branded campaign; involvement of disability and other equality groups; and recruitment, guidance and training of third party reporting organisations. This action was a direct result of feedback during the development of the first disability equality scheme.
- Training is an area of activity that cuts across all equality strands. The Council offers a range of training related to Equality and Diversity. A one day Equality and Diversity training course delivered by the Council's Employee Development team is central to this work. There is currently a target of 300 staff a year, and over 2000 staff have attended the training since 2004.

Since April 2009, 240 staff and 21 elected members have attended. An additional 114 staff have completed a new e-learning course on “Diversity in the Workplace”.

Partnership Violence Against Women Strategy: Progress update – April 2010

The Highland Community Planning Partnership is continuing to make significant progress in fulfilling the commitments set out in the “Highland Violence Against Women Strategy, 2008-11”. The following Strategy actions were completed between December 2009 and April 2010:

- The development and completion of multi-agency guidance for responding to Violence Against Women, which includes specific responsibilities for Council staff in Social Work, Housing and Education Culture and Sport Services
- Development of a Gender Equality Policy for schools, which will help to tackle Violence Against Women and occupational segregation in the future
- Agreement of the minimum standards that perpetrator programmes supported by Criminal Justice Social Work will adhere to – and work is now being taken forward to source appropriate training, materials and resources
- Two Housing protocols are also being developed – one jointly with Violence Against Women support services to help reduce homelessness and increase housing support for women affected and another jointly with Northern Constabulary to ensure properties are secure and safe
- Violence Against Women Training across Highland continues and has been further enhanced with the addition of two new training courses, “What we need to know when working with perpetrators of domestic abuse” and “Sexualisation of Culture”

Demonstrate that the Council continues to meet its public sector duties.

- Twice yearly reports are made to Resources Committee on progress with equalities; in addition activities are reported in the strategic documents including SOA2 and the Corporate Plan.
- The Council has commissioned a database to record monitor and report on Equality Impact Assessments being undertaken.

5 Developing a Single Equality Scheme

5.1 The single equality scheme is prepared as a working draft in preparation for a new integrated equality duty on the public sector in April 2011. It sets out the arrangements we put in place to meet the existing race, disability and gender General and Specific duties and starts to plan for the extended duties. Significant work is being undertaken to update available data on equalities at local level and a separate document will complement the scheme. It is proposed that until further guidance is available that the five key objectives remain in place for 2010 – 2011. The revised action plan builds on and continues earlier activities. Where there are common activities across all or some of the protected characteristics these have been combined.

The actions in the Scheme will be based on:

- Data on equalities groups and their needs
- Identified gaps through equality impact assessments and self-assessments
- Consultation and involvement of equality groups
- Actions arising from the BV2 audit
- The requirements of the equalities legislation and statutory and non-statutory guidance.

Relevant actions from the previous separate schemes will be rolled forward. A final scheme will be in place by April 2011.

6 Duties on the Education Authority

- 6.1** There are similar specific duties on the Council as an Education Authority and a similar approach will be taken to bring together and streamline equality objectives in Education and to prepare a Single Equality Scheme for Education. This will be prepared, implemented and monitored by a working group of Education staff

7 Resource implications

- 7.1** There are no resource implications arising from this report.

8 Legal implications

- 8.1** This report addresses the Council's equality duties to report on progress and review its equality objectives and to comply with legislation.

9 Equality implications

- 9.1** The draft Single Equality Scheme has a high relevance for equality issues and is intended to positively promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination. A full equality impact assessment will be undertaken prior to completing the scheme in April 2011.

10 Climate Change implications

- 10.1** There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

11 Areas for future development for Highland Council

- 11.1** Equal Opportunities remains a corporate priority for Highland Council in terms of compliance with the public sector duties. To meet the requirements of the duties the following future developments have been identified:
- Further consultation will be carried out on the Single Equality Scheme and the final version presented to Resources Committee.
 - A Single Equality Scheme to be developed by the Education Service.
 - Further progress to ensure that equalities monitoring and profiling is carried out, where relevant, in the delivery of services.
 - Continued progress is required across the Council to evidence that our policies, functions and practices are being assessed for their impact on equality issues.

Recommendation:

Members are asked to:

1. Approve the working draft Single Equality Scheme for further consultation.
2. Note the introduction of the Equality Act 2010
3. Note the progress in delivering current equality schemes

Signature:

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive

Author: Rosemary Mackinnon, Equal Opportunities Officer, Policy and Performance Team

Date:

APPENDIX 1

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL DRAFT EQUALITY SCHEME 2010 – 2011

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For further information, comments, or to request information on the scheme in alternative formats or language, please contact:

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Foreword

We are pleased to present to you the Highland Council's draft Single Equality Scheme. The new Equality Act 2010 received Royal Assent on 8th April 2010 and it will introduce a new single and extended public sector duty in 2011. This scheme brings together our previous three schemes for race, equality and gender and is published as a draft for consultation in preparation for the new duty. It marks the beginning of our approach to show how we gather information and involve stakeholders with regard to the new strands in order to identify priorities for action.

The Highland Council is the largest employer and provider of services in the area; we are committed to ensuring fair and equal access to employment and Council services and to tackling prejudice and discrimination. We want to ensure that equality is central to the aims of the Highland Council, which are to:

- Make the Highlands one of Europe's leading regions;
- Create Sustainable communities with more balanced population growth and economic development across the Highlands; and
- Build a fairer and healthier Highlands

Equality is not about treating everyone the same. It's about making sure, as far as possible, that everyone has the same opportunities. Sometimes that means we need to provide services differently for different people. While real progress has been made in recent years, we recognise that more needs to be done. Certain parts of our communities face persistent inequalities and are more likely to live in poverty, be out of work, experience prejudice and discrimination, face barriers in access to services or employment, and are less likely to be represented in public life.

To finalise this single scheme for April 2011 we will review our equality and diversity work to identify priorities so we can best focus our efforts to make positive changes for our communities and our employees. In line with the single equality Act it takes a simpler, more strategic and outcome-focused approach to our equality work,

The practical steps we are taking are set out in an Action Plan. We will aim to assess our policies, practices and guidance to make sure they don't discriminate against anyone. We will monitor progress every 6 months to ensure they actions continue to be relevant and focused on key priorities.

Increasingly, we work with our Community Planning Partners to take forward initiatives that benefit communities and deliver services effectively. In partnership we will also seek to address barriers that prevent people from participating and contributing fully in the communities where they live and work.

We value the experiences and views that people have shared with us on equality and diversity issues and have sought to reflect these in this new Scheme.

Alistair Dodds
Chief Executive

Sandy Park
Convenor

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** “An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and substantive opportunity to live in the ways people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish. An equal society recognises people’s different needs, situations and goals and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be.”
UK Equalities Review 2007¹
- 1.2** The Highlands of Scotland has a growing and increasingly diverse population. We serve communities and work in a geography that are also diverse in their nature. It is an area rich in cultural heritage which attracts tourists from across the globe. There is a strong voluntary sector that supports groups with a focus on equality and diversity issues and connects with the public service agencies.
- 1.3** Like other listed public bodies, the Council is subject to equality duties that include a requirement to prepare and publish race², disability³ and gender⁴ equality schemes.
- 1.4** This draft Single Equality Scheme replaces the Highland Council’s previous three separate race, disability and gender equality schemes. It anticipates the enforcement of the Equality Act 2010 and is developed as a working draft in preparation for a single equality duty which comes into force in April 2011 with associated guidance. The scheme will be developed further once guidance is published and consulted on during the interim period and it will cover the full range of protected characteristics described in section 2.4.
- 1.5** The scheme reflects the practical steps the Council already takes to remove barriers and improve access to services and employment. It brings together the work of individual services; examples of current activities are in Appendix 2. The scheme is accompanied by a revised action plan in Appendix 4. The action plan rolls forward relevant actions from the previous three schemes and starts to incorporate the extended duty to cover all the protected characteristics.
- 1.6** The Council has five key equality objectives, based on information gathered in the lifespan of the three individual schemes and from stakeholder involvement. These are to :
- Deliver accessible services and to treat customers fairly and with dignity and respect
 - Ensure that our employment practices and policies are fair and accessible
 - Increase engagement, involvement and representation of equality groups
 - Create a culture in the Council that promotes equality, and demonstrates that discrimination and harassment on equality grounds will not be tolerated
 - Demonstrate the continued progress of the Council to meet its public sector duties.

To achieve this we need to ensure that services make a positive impact on the lives of equalities groups, that people have a say in the decisions that affect them, and that this is measured by increased customer satisfaction and confidence in services.

- 1.7** While the public sector duties are an important driver, the Council is committed to

tackling and challenging discrimination and prejudice and to going beyond our legislative duties. We wish to remove barriers to opportunities in employment, participation, and access to services, and to demonstrate that we value and embrace diversity in our communities. We want to be an employer of choice, attracting a diverse workforce, where staff can achieve their potential. We also want to protect those in our communities who are most vulnerable to discrimination, prejudice and harassment and allow them to lead fulfilling lives free from disadvantage.

2 BACKGROUND AND LEGAL CONTEXT

2.1 Despite over 30 years of equality legislation and some significant progress, some groups of people still face significant levels of inequality, discrimination and harassment and do not enjoy the same life opportunities as everybody else. For example, in the UK, we know that:

- Women are on average paid around 22 per cent less than men.⁵
- In 2007 people aged 65 and over outnumbered children for the first time.⁶
- More than six out of ten lesbian and gay schoolchildren experience homophobic bullying.⁷
- Only 50% of disabled people of working age are in work compared with 80% of non-disabled people.⁸
- Only 59% of ethnic minorities are employed, compared with 73% of the general population.⁹
- Only 29% of Muslim women are economically active.¹⁰
- 62% of transgender people experienced harassment in public places¹¹
- Gypsies' / Travellers' life expectancy is 10 years below the national average.¹²

2.2 **Key Equalities legislation:** Equalities legislation has undergone significant changes with the introduction of new proactive duties in the areas of gender, race and disability on the public sector since the turn of the century, and the extension of protection from discrimination to cover sexual orientation, religion or belief and age. Following the UK Equalities Review in 2007, it has developed further with the passing of the new single Equality Act. The key current equalities legislation, including a full list of the public sector duties, is listed in Appendix 1.

2.3 The General and Specific Duties

The current duties on the public sector have two main components: the general duty and the specific duties. These vary for race, disability and gender but they share a common aim for public services to mainstream equality to ensure that all individuals are able to benefit equally from public services. Where differences between the duties exist public bodies must take account of these.

Until a new single equality duty comes into force in 2011, public bodies must continue to meet their legal obligations under the race, disability and gender duties. In summary, these are to pay due regard in all their work to:

- Promote equality of opportunity
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Promote good relations
- Eliminate harassment
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people;

- Encourage participation of disabled people in public life; and
- Take steps to meet the needs of disabled people.

The specific duties are the steps that public bodies have to take to help them to meet the general duties. This included publishing schemes which show how they will:

- Gather information on how their work affects different racial groups, disabled people and men and women, including trans men and women.
- Consult employees, service users, trade unions and other stakeholders, and involve disabled people.
- Train staff in connection with the duties
- Assess the impact of policies and practices and publish the results.
- In the light of this evidence decide what the priorities for taking action should be.
- Demonstrate the steps that will deliver the best outcomes in race, disability and gender equality in an action plan.
- Prepare an equal pay policy statement, and report on this every three years

In addition, there are specific duties to report annually on progress, and to review schemes every three years; to monitor employees by ethnicity; and specific duties on Education Authorities;.

2.4 The Equality Act 2010:

The new Equality Act 2010 received Royal Assent on 8th April 2010. Appendix 1 summarises the key elements. The Act brings together and harmonises the laws referred to above and aims to make understanding the law simpler. It has been drawn up to tackle inequality and prevent discrimination against people who have what is called a protected characteristic, these are:

- age
- disability
- race
- sex
- pregnancy and maternity
- gender reassignment
- marriage or civil partnership status
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation.

Everyone has several of these protected characteristics; this means everyone is protected by the Equality Act. In April 2011, the Act will introduce a new single public sector duty which will require public bodies to:

- eliminate unlawful conduct
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations across all protected characteristics

Scottish specific duties and associated guidance will be published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, to assist with the delivery of the general equality duty. The final version of this Single Equality Scheme will be drawn up in accordance with the statutory and non-statutory guidance to accompany the duty.

The Equality Act will also introduce a new separate socio-economic duty on key

public bodies to consider, in all the strategic decisions they make, how they will tackle the disadvantage some people face because of socio-economic disadvantage. This new duty recognised that inequality and disadvantage are not only associated with issues such as gender, age, disability or ethnicity. Overarching and interwoven with these is the persistent inequality that results from someone's family background or where they were born.

2.5 Enforcement

2.6 The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is a non-departmental public body established under the Equality Act 2006 – accountable for its public funds, but independent of government. The Commission champions equality and human rights for all, working to eliminate discrimination, reduce inequality, protect human rights and to build good relations, ensuring that everyone has a fair chance to participate in society. The new Commission brings together the work of the three previous equality commissions and also takes on responsibility for the other aspects of equality: age, sexual orientation and religion or belief, as well as human rights.

The Commission also has significant powers to enforce the equalities duties of organisations and authorities, including, ultimately, launching official inquiries and formal investigations. If a public authority does not comply with its duties, its actions, or failure to act, can be subject to legal challenge. The EHRC has powers of enforcement over a public authority and can take action for non compliance. It has the power to audit and inspect where it believes non compliance has occurred.

3 THE HIGHLAND CONTEXT

3.1 Highland is the largest local authority area in Scotland, comprising one-third of the total area of Scotland in a land area of 26,484 km². The population has grown over the past 10 years by 4.3%, at a higher rate than for Scotland as a whole, and is estimated to be 219, 400 with over 108, 000 households¹³. Around half the population live in the inner Moray Firth area, the rest are in remote small towns and remote rural areas and many areas are sparsely populated. Most population growth is due to migration, with more people moving to the area than leaving, although growth is not spread evenly across the region.

3.2 The Highland Council is the largest employer in the area and provides a wide range of services which support and impact on all our communities ranging from refuse collection, education, community care, money advice, Council Tax and rates collection, to housing and many others.

3.3 The Highland Council Programme and Corporate Plan

The Administration of The Highland Council has produced a programme of action, Strengthening the Highlands¹⁴, which sets out its priorities between 2009 - 11 for making the Highlands one of Europe's leading regions. The Administration aims to create sustainable communities with more balanced population growth and economic development across the Highlands and to build a fairer and healthier Highlands. The Programme contains five main themes:

- What we will do for children and families
- What we will do for communities and older people

- What we will do for the economy
- What we will do for our environment
- What we will do to make Highland Council more effective and efficient

The Council has produced a Corporate Plan¹⁵ to mirror the priorities of the Programme of The Highland Council 2009-2011, which sets out how the Council aims to ensure its performance is accountable. Individual Service Plans detail the wide-ranging actions we are taking to implement the Corporate Plan.

3.4 Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) and the Community Planning Partnership¹⁶

The Single Outcome Agreement for the Highlands, was first launched in August 2008, and revised in July 2009. The Highland SOA2 reflects the new relationship between the Scottish Government and Local Government and one that both levels of government are committed to developing. The Agreement is based upon the Concordat between the Scottish Government and COSLA.

The SOA also provides the framework for community planning in the Highlands. The Community Planning Partnership includes the Council, NHS Highland, Northern Constabulary, Highland Fire and Rescue Services, SNH, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and the Voluntary sector. The SOA2 has re-focused partnership efforts by agreeing 15 local outcomes and identifying which to give most priority to.

The public agencies in the partnership share the same public sector duties and work together on a range of equality priorities, supported by the voluntary sector. This scheme will build on the outcomes in the SOA2, including a number of specific equality outcomes, to ensure all our communities are affected positively by the identified priorities.

3.5 Best Value and Equal Opportunities

The [Local Government in Scotland Act 2003](#) placed a statutory duty of Best Value upon local authorities in the discharge of their functions. Best Value arrangements exist to secure continuous improvement in the performance of functions by public service organisations. A local authority which secures Best Value will be able to demonstrate equal opportunities arrangements¹⁷.

The outcome of a Best Value 2 audit carried out in Autumn 2009 will be presented to Council in June 2010. Any improvement actions for equalities will be incorporated into a final draft of the single equality scheme.

3.6 Equality Governance in Highland Council

The key political lead on equality and diversity issues in Highland Council is the Chair of the Resources Committee.

An Equality Working group supports corporate equalities work which includes representatives from each of the Council services. The Assistant Chief Executive has recently taken over as chair of this group which will provides an opportunity to deal with equality issues in a more strategic way and to focus on improving performance on equality issues.

To oversee the implementation of the equalities work regular updates are made

to the Council's Senior Management Team on policy options and performance reporting. . Recently the implementation of the schemes has been managed through quarterly reviews of service performance and scrutiny of targets and measures and this will include reporting on equalities targets in progress reports against the Corporate Plan. .

3.7 Equality and Diversity: Partnership Working

A Community Planning Partnership Equality and Diversity Group was established in 2006 and Highland Council is actively involved with partners to promote equality of opportunity and diversity. In addition to sharing good practice, the group has identified and evolved a number of key priorities for joint action which are based on feedback from community engagement and are regularly reviewed for progress and relevance. These have included:

- The development and implementation of a partnership hate incident reporting system and campaign.
- Engagement and involvement of equality groups in the preparation of equality schemes.
- Identifying, gathering and analysing equalities data
- A partnership event to raise awareness of disability in the workplace and establish demand for a partnership approach to a disabled employee network.

Actions taken in partnership are intended to complement and add value to each partner's work through efficient use of resources and delivering positive outcomes for equality groups. Much of this is described further in other sections and the action plan.

Other relevant areas of partnership work involving partner agencies include:

- "For Highland's Children 3" (FHC3) will be the main driver for improvement in the delivery of integrated services and to inform and involve service users and will contain actions to improve services for Children related to equality. <http://www.forhighlandschildren.org/html/ics/ics-introduction.php>
- Joint Community Care provision
- A multi-agency Gypsy/Traveller action plan <http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/CCA41F58-F777-4AAF-8457-77123DF03E7E/0/gypsytravellerplan2008.pdf>
- A partnership Violence Against Women strategy <http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A83B770D-CFAC-4E42-86CC-85F2C9DB41F2/0/ViolenceAgainstWomenStrategy20082011.pdf>

3.8 Understanding equalities in Highland

3.9 Summary of information data:

Barriers associated with characteristics such as gender, race, disability or ill health and childhood experience perpetuate socio-economic inequalities, poverty and poorer health and be exacerbated by poorer access to services particularly in rural and remote areas. In Highland, the settlement pattern means that the challenges of supporting people who are hard to reach can be exacerbated in that they can also be hard to find.

3.10 Age Population projections for Highland between 2008 – 2033 show:

- An increase in the birth rate is expected to result in a small increase in the

- numbers of children and young people in the 0-15 and 16-29 age groups;
- A 60% increase (13,200 people) is projected for the 65 to 74 age group;
- There is likely to be a 120% increase (22,000 people) in the number of people aged over 75. One feature of this age group will be a disproportionate increase in the number of men as their life expectancy is increasing slightly relative to that of women.

3.11 Race

- According to the Census 2001 the minority ethnic population in Highland 0.8% of the total population compared to 2% nationally.
- Recent population growth in Highland is due in part to in-migration. Between 2003-4 and 2007-8 over 13,000 migrants registered for National Insurance Numbers with 67% coming from the Accession States of Europe (the majority from Poland).
- The Annual Population Survey 2009 shows that 71% of working age people from minority ethnic groups were in employment compared with 60% for Scotland. In Highland Council, less than 1% of the workforce is from a minority ethnic background.
- According to the twice yearly Scottish Government survey, the Highland Council area has one of the highest populations of gypsies/travellers across Scotland.
- In 2008, 4% of the school population were from a minority ethnic group this and includes children and young people from the Gypsy/Traveller community. This corresponds with 1.4%, in 2004. This is reflected in figures that show in 2008, 733 young people spoke at least one of 61 languages other than English or Gaelic in their home. This is an increase from 404 bilingual pupils in 2005-06.

3.12 Disability:

- The 2001 Census reported that 18% of the population had a long term or limiting illness, lower than the 20% Scottish average. There is strong evidence of the age-related link to disability.
- Of the Highland population living with a limiting long term illness, 24% are found in the most deprived areas compared to 13% in those considered least deprived.
- In Highland, 9320 people claimed incapacity benefit or severe disablement allowance in February 2009.
- Between 2003 and 2008, the number of people with learning disabilities in Highland increased by 43%. NHS Highland and Highland Council know of about 2000 adults in the Highlands with Learning Disabilities¹⁸.
- In Highland there are 1237 people registered as blind or partially sighted
- It is estimated that there are around 2,390 adults with a profound or severe hearing loss and around 29,570 adults with a mild to moderate hearing loss.
- Analysis of the Highland Council's Equal Opportunities monitoring information shows that just over 1% of staff identify as having a disability.¹⁹

3.13 Faith

- The 2001 Census included a question on religion for the first time – in Highland 67% identified with the Christian faith; 27% had no faith; of the minority faiths Muslims had the highest population at 0.18%.

3.14 Gender

- Women earn £75 a week less than men and there are fewer women in full time work
- 2005/06, in Highland female victims represent 90% of all domestic abuse incidents (1350 incidents in 2005/06)
- 72% of the Council's workforce is female and 28% is male. 49% of the Council's employees are employed on a full-time basis while 51% work on a part-time basis.
- Widespread occupational segregation in Scotland is reflected in the Council's workforce.
- Highland Council is in the third quartile of Councils for women managers as top 2% of earners.
- 75% of elected Council Members are men.

3.15 Sexual Orientation

- Stonewall Scotland estimates that there are 300,000 gay people in Scotland, 6% of the population. A 2009 Stonewall study of Scottish LGBT migration patterns in 2009 suggests that LGBT people leave rural areas for the city.

3.16 Overview of Equality groups in Highland

In Highland there are no umbrella networks which provide a voice for any of the specific equality strands. However, the Council holds a database of over 150 local and national organisations with an interest in equality and diversity issues. The following provides a brief overview of some local groups and projects

3.17 Age

Older people in the Highlands are represented by an active Senior Citizen's Network, and are also supported and represented by organisations such as Age Scotland which has recently formed as a result of the national merging of Help the Aged and Age Concern, and Highland Community Care Forum.

Younger people, a major initiative of the Council's development work with young people is the Highland Youth Voice (HYV). HYV is an elected body of young people drawn from across Highland. The young people have a wide range of opportunities to 'have their say' and are also involved in taking forward their own agenda and tackling issues that are important to them. There is also now a full time Youth Convener, the first of its kind in Scotland, and is a key representative of young people in Highland at various committee, staff and youth meetings.

Ethnicity and race

Support and networks in Highland include:

- Between 2005-2008, the Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland (BEMIS) supported a part-time rural development worker in Highland.
- The Council for Ethnic Minority Organisations (CEMVO) has carried out structured capacity building with the local Chinese Association and has assisted the Association to access funding. CEMVO currently funds a part-time office in Inverness.
- The Workers Educational Association has been involved in a range of related activities in Highland including the partnership provision of ESOL trainers and courses, and its ongoing support for the International Women's Group.
- The number of minority ethnic associations or groups remains small but includes the Inverness Polish Association and the Scottish Highlands &

Islands and Moray Chinese Association, the Indian Association, the Bangladeshi Association; the Polish/Scottish Union; and the Caithness Ethnic Minority Group under the support of Caithness Voluntary Group.

- The Inverness Citizen's Advice Bureau received funding from the Scottish Government to address race and faith discrimination and also from the Equality and Human Rights Commission to support broader cases of discrimination

Faith

- There are two Inter Faith groups in the Highlands, one in Skye and a more recently formed group in the Inverness area which has representation from the Hindu, Muslim, Baha'i, Buddhist communities and various Christian denominations.

Disability

A wide range of organisations support, represent and/or provide services to disabled people in Highland, these include:

- There are 8 Disability Access Panels in Highland which also meet on a regular basis as an Alliance.
- The Highland User Group (HUG) is a collective advocacy group, which represents the interests of users of mental health services across the Highlands and challenges stigma surrounding mental health.
- People with learning disabilities are supported and represented by the Health and Happiness Project and People First.
- The Highland Deaf Forum and Highland Society for Blind People are both represented on a strategic working group on sensory issues.
- Autism Rights Group Highland (ARGH) provides group advocacy for adults living in the Highland region.
- Highland Community Care Forum (HCCF) helps users and carers to speak up so that their views and experiences shape local services and support for carers include young carers, people with mental health problems, people with learning and physical disabilities and older people. HCCF.
- National organisations such as Enable, Capability Scotland, Leonard Cheshire, Sense Scotland, Alzheimer Scotland, Lead Scotland and Schizophrenia Scotland are all represented in Highland

. Gender

- The Women@Work project is a Highland-wide women's network, which encourages women to speak out about things that matter to them at home, at work and in the community
- Local Violence Against Women forums across Highland are taking forward a range of issues identified in a partnership strategy
- The SWANS is a self supporting help group for all Trans folk in the North of Scotland

Sexual Orientation

- There is an active Highland LGBT Forum and Social Group.
- The Terrance Higgins Trust provides support for LGBT people in Highland.
- Highland Rainbow Folk is a recently formed group working to raise awareness of issues facing older LGBT men and women and transgender people.

3.18 Highlands & Islands Equality Forum

The Highlands & Islands Equality Forum is a project to raise awareness of Equality issues in the Highlands & Islands through advice, information and training.

4 ARRANGEMENTS FOR GATHERING INFORMATION

- 4.1** Significant amounts of available demographic data were gathered in the development of each of the Council's three separate schemes. The information was shared with Community Planning Partners, who added additional sources of information, for example on racially aggravated crimes and health inequalities.
- 4.2** The Council has arrangements in place to gather information on employment and equalities monitoring. During 2006 and 2007, employees were sent an Equal Opportunities monitoring form and asked to verify information. Employees, and applicants for posts, are asked to self-report using the council's equality monitoring form. This allows for the collection and analysis of information on recruitment, training and retention of disabled employees. This will include monitoring of Education staff.
- 4.3** At national level, work has been undertaken to improve, develop and harmonise statistical data relevant to equality issues, including Scottish Government high level equality statistics²⁰, the development of the Census 2011, and the Equality Measurement Framework²¹.

There remain many challenges with the use of equalities data. While information is readily available by age and gender, there is no single measure or estimate of prevalence of disability and equalities monitoring of disability is not widely carried out beyond employment; information on sexual identity is not routinely collected and data is scarce although information now available on the numbers of civil partnerships. The main measure of ethnicity is the Census which is carried out every ten years and so becomes quickly out of date; at local level many population levels are too small to provide robust data. Information on religion and belief is also collected primarily through the Census.

- 4.4** In the development of a single equality scheme, a sub-group of staff involved in data collection from Policy, Education, Planning, Social Work, Personnel has reviewed and updated the information gathered for the three schemes, identified additional information and gaps in particular from Council services, and has made recommendations to facilitate regular review and updating of equality information.

The information gathered will be presented as a profile of equality in Highland in a complementary document to the single equality scheme.

- 4.5** It is important to develop a clearer picture of equality groups in our community in order to establish a baseline for improving performance and setting realistic targets.

However, as there are limitations to formal statistical data, equalities evidence is also gathered from a range of other sources both through monitoring and qualitative information, for example as a result of undertaking impact assessments, the biannual employee survey, public performance survey,

complaints and service reviews.

Other key information is collected and reported for equality Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs), and scrutiny through inspections and audit. There are two equality SPIs reported annually to Audit Scotland on the number and percentage of women in the top 2% and top 5% of earners in local authorities and the percentage of public caller properties accessible to disabled people.

- 4.6 Example:** Highland Council Public Performance Survey and Citizens Panel
Each year the Council sends questionnaires to a random sample of households throughout the Highlands asking for opinions on contact with the Council; satisfaction with services; views on community life; and reasons for any dissatisfaction. The results are analysed by age, disability, gender and ethnicity. Where results have significance by equality group these are highlighted in the annual Public Performance Survey report.

In a new approach from 2010, the Council is establishing a Citizens Panel. Work is being undertaken to ensure the sample is representative of the population in terms of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, income (if possible) as well as place. This may involve boosting the sample to avoid disproportionate exclusions of people in particular circumstances.

- 4.7** The Council will continue to use the information it gathers to review its equality objectives and action plan, and to consider what additional steps may be required to promote equality. This will inform the development of the action plan, its reviews and the ongoing development of a single equality scheme.

5 INVOLVEMENT, ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 5.1** Each of the current equality duties has an expectation that equality community groups will be consulted and engaged in the development of equality schemes, and in development of policies and practices that directly affect them. The disability duties go beyond this and require the 'involvement' of disabled people described as a more active engagement of disabled stakeholders than 'consultation'²².

This single scheme incorporates the engagement and involvement undertaken in the development and review of the earlier three schemes. It reflects a range of involvement in the development and delivery of services; reviews; consultations; complaints and comments about services. These activities are also a key element of the information gathered in the preparation of the scheme.

- 5.2** Further consultation will be carried out on this draft scheme through to April 2011 and will involve:
- representatives and individuals from local equality groups
 - national equality organisations
 - staff views, equalities working Group, and senior management team
 - elected members
 - community planning partners
 - other Scottish local authorities

- 5.3** Unlike many other local authorities, in Highland there are no umbrella networks

which provide a voice for any of the specific equality strands. However, the Council holds a database of over 150 local and national organisations with an interest in equality and diversity issues. The Council has regular contact with the Highlands & Islands Equality Forum; this is a project which carries our training and awareness raising and has contact with a wide range of interested groups across the Highlands.

- 5.4** There is a strong community partnership approach to engagement, both in the development of equality schemes and in specific areas of partnership work on equality, a number of initiative are listed below. In addition, the Council meets regularly with other officers in the Scottish Council's Equality Network to share good practice and information at national and local levels.
- 5.5** The Council has a commitment to meet the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#). This is being taken forward by the Council's Corporate and Ward Managers to further develop and implement.
- 5.6** We engage, consult and involve people about their views on equality issues through a number of sources – as service users, employees, through comments and complaints, and through targeted activities and ongoing work. Some qualitative examples include:
- “Life in the Highlands: Disability Equality Schemes” 2006
 - Partnership consultation on Gender (2007) and review of Race (2008) schemes
 - Equality and Diversity Partnership events 2009
 - With partners, involvement with equality groups in the development of hate incident work.
 - Same as You: Local Implementation Groups for people with learning disabilities
 - Local Implementation Groups in mental health
 - Individual interviews (VOXUR) 2009
 - Strategic Working Group on Sensory Issues brings together elected members, officers from the Highland Council and NHS Highland, voluntary agencies and representatives from the Deaf and hard of hearing and visual impairments groups.
 - Development of the Highland Joint Community Care Plan has included a significant engagement with a range of service user groups.
 - Support to, and regular involvement with, eight Disability Access Panels in Highland, eg with Planning and Development Services, Streetscape work.
 - Advocacy projects funded by the Council and NHS Highland, for example People First and Health and Happiness (Learning Disability) and Highland Users Group (mental health) have established regular channels to feedback issues of relevance to statutory partners.
 - Consultation on the partnership Violence Against Women strategy
 - Joint Consultative Group is a key mechanism for consultation of employment issues
 - Services regularly review and consult on the use of services. There is continual contact at local level with a wide range of voluntary and community groups including Community Councils. Recent restructuring has introduced proposals for new Ward Forums which will include representatives from local partner agencies and the local community.

Equal Opportunities requirements will be encouraged in these new structures.

- Young people are involved in Pupil Councils, Youth Voice and Youth Forums across Highland and have been involved in focus groups on race equality and disability issues. In Education.
- Ward Forums have been set up across the Highlands and meet regularly in public, and are held in accessible venues. Representatives of community councils and partner agencies also serve on the forums

5.7 There are two key quantitative approaches used by the Council to consult widely on issues of importance which have included, or mainstreamed, equality issues. These gather equality related information and provide some analysis by equality groups. A public performance survey is commissioned annually to understand community views and an employee survey is commissioned bi-annually.

Public Performance Survey: Having assessed the survey approach and questionnaire of the Annual Public Performance Survey in 2009 for its impact on equalities groups, improvements were made to the questionnaire and an analysis by equalities group was commissioned. Where results have significance by age, gender or disability these are highlighted in the report. This survey and others will be routed through a new Citizen's Panel from 2010. The Panel will be representative of the Highland population in terms of geography, gender, age, disability, ethnicity and socio-economic status.

Employee Survey:

Since 2007, the bi-annual Highland Council Employee Survey includes questions about perceptions and experiences of discrimination in the workplace, as well as awareness of flexible working opportunities.

5.8 In addition to the above, there is a significant amount of informal involvement with equality communities and stakeholders, for example through attendance at meetings and event organised by community groups and responding to enquiries or complaints.

5.9 **Example:** Members of the public are being asked to make their voices heard in a consultation on changes to community care services in the Highlands. The consultation document sets out the approach of the Highland Council and NHS Highland to meeting the support needs of a range of people in the Highland community. This can include older people and other vulnerable groups, such as people with learning disability, sensory impairment, mental health and/or substance misuse problems and those who are homeless.

A number of equality communities have been approached to take part in the consultation to encourage those who views are not always considered to take part. The partners have worked with the Highland Community Care Forum to develop an inclusive consultation strategy which takes the needs of diverse communities into account.

6 ARRANGEMENTS FOR EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

6.1 The purpose of an equality impact assessment (EQIA) is to ensure that an authority's decisions and activities do not disadvantage people on equality

grounds. It also identifies opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity, including consideration of where the different parts of the disability equality duty (such as promoting positive attitudes) might be built into those policies and practices. Where a negative impact, or missed opportunity to achieve a more positive impact, is identified this indicates to the authority that it should have due regard to the need to modify the policy or practice.

- 6.2** The Council has made a commitment that all new and reviewed policies and practices are assessed for impact on all equality groups. A number of full equality impact assessments have been undertaken and published.
- 6.3** The Council has introduced guidance and a toolkit to support the process to carry out EQIAs and, during 2007 – 09 key staff undertook training on EQIAs. A two stage approach to assessment of regard to equality has been adopted. This involves an initial screening for relevance, followed by a full EQIA where required. Summaries of full EQIAs are published on the Council's website at: <http://www.highland.gov.uk/livinghere/equalopportunities/eqia.htm>
- 6.4** We recognise that more requires to be done to simplify the EQIA process, improve consistency, support staff, report on progress, and critically embed into decision making processes. To this end, the Council has purchased a new database to map policies and practices, record and monitor EQIAs and which will be introduced during 2010. This toolkit is accompanied by an e-learning course to guide staff. Senior managers have already piloted this training which will be further rolled out to relevant staff.
- 6.5** Where an assessment, or other circumstances, such as complaints, reviews or inspections, show that any of our policies or practices are likely to have an adverse impact on equality groups, the Council will consider how it can meet the general duties and whether action is required. We also aim to better prioritise which policies and functions require full equality assessments.
- 6.6** In addition, from 2010, the Council will formally require authors of any reports to committees to assess the relevance of the subject to equalities and record the outcome as part of a standard report template.

7 EMPLOYMENT AND IMPLEMENTING THE SPECIFIC EMPLOYMENT DUTIES

- 7.1** Providing equality of opportunity in employment is among our most important goals and values.
- 7.2** Collecting and monitoring equality data in employment is key to analysing our workforce profile to identify how representative it is of the community it serves. It has been an essential element of improving the gender profile of senior positions.
- 7.3** To meet the specific employment duties described in Appendix 1, systems have been put in place to monitor the workforce by ethnicity as well as job applicants, applicants for training and the operation of grievance, disciplinary and harassment procedures by racial group. There are actions in place to improve the quality and level of data collection during this lifetime of this scheme.
- 7.4** At present, the Council monitors equality information in employment related to

age, gender, disability and ethnicity. We do not currently routinely monitor transgender status, sexual orientation or religion or belief but will review this in the light of the introduction of the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that our information gathering and reporting arrangements to ensure that discrimination does not occur in recruitment and employment in these areas.

- As part of this review the Council has subscribed to the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme to consider best practice regarding employment and sexual orientation issues. In addition, we are aware that there is likely under-reporting of the prevalence of disability in the workplace (1%) and have joined the Employers Forum on Disability to again assist with looking at best practice in this area.

7.5 Personal data is treated with care and in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

7.6 There are a range of policies in place to support equality of opportunity in the workplace, including an Equal Opportunities Policy, Recruitment and Selection, Flexible Working, Harassment at Work, Supporting Employees Experiencing Domestic Abuse policy, Maternity Provisions and support, and homeworking.

7.8 EQUAL PAY STATEMENT

7.9 The Highland Council is committed to the principle of equal pay for all its employees and aims to eliminate any sex bias in its pay systems. There has been considerable progress in implementing a new pay and grading structure and settling equal pay claims, however, there is still work to be done to manage outstanding claims. The Council is also implementing harmonised terms and conditions of employment which will remove further potential discrimination.

7.10 The Council's Equal Pay statement is due to be reviewed by September 2010 and is available at:
<http://www.highland.gov.uk/livinghere/equalopportunities/equalpaystatement.htm>

8 ARRANGEMENTS TO TRAIN STAFF ON RELEVANT ISSUES

8.1 The Council's Employee Development Team has responsibility for delivering a range of corporate and developmental training, including management development and customer care. A one-day Equal Opportunities and Diversity training course has been delivered in-house since 2004. The training incorporates the requirements of the equalities legislation including the public sector duties and is regularly reviewed. The next review will incorporate changes due to the Equality Act 2010. This course was initially delivered to Service Management Teams, and has since been rolled out to over 2100 staff. Elected members also receive Equality and Diversity training. Since late 2009, the direct training has also been complemented by an e-learning course on equality and diversity in the workplace.

8.2 Lead staff and Members have also received training on the Council's revised recruitment and selection procedures, incorporating equal opportunities objectives and promoting fair employment practices.

8.3 In addition to the Equality and Diversity training, the Council delivers a range of related courses:

- Disability Confident is delivered as an e-learning course to up to 100 staff annually
- Between 2007 – 09, 50 staff received direct training on carrying out Equality Impact Assessments. From Dec 2009 an e-learning package has been introduced to ensure relevant staff have the required skills and knowledge to carry out EQIAs and 33 managers have completed the course to 01 May 2010.
- As part of its Women into Management programme, the Council delivers a regular series of Women into Management workshops.

Employee Development staff are also aware of the need to mainstream equal opportunities into the provision of general training, in particular management competencies, care staff training, community engagement and customer services.

9 USING THE INFORMATION GATHERED: THE ACTION PLAN

9.1 The Council's Single Equality Scheme has five key aims in its attached Action Plan in Appendix 4 to:

- Deliver accessible services and to treat customers fairly and with dignity and respect
- Ensure that our employment practices and policies are fair and accessible
- Increase engagement, involvement and representation of equality groups
- Create a culture in the Council that promotes equality, and demonstrates that discrimination and harassment on equality grounds will not be tolerated
- Demonstrate that the Council continues to meet its public sector duties

9.2 The action plan is built on activities already undertaken by the Council and based on existing information and research about the needs of equality groups and the barriers they face. Appendix 3 includes a summary of progress against the action plans of the previous three schemes.

9.3 A number of these actions are long term, and are ongoing. Others are new or are amended to ensure they are appropriate and relevant, and may be further amended during the draft stage of the scheme. Where possible these actions support and are set against measurable outcomes that show improvements to the lives of disabled people in Highland.

9.4 The priorities identified against each aim are summarised below:

9.5 Deliver accessible services and to treat customers fairly and with dignity and respect:

- Policy development ensures that equality issues are considered
- Services provided directly and service procured, commissioned and grant-aided are accessible and treat our customers with dignity and respect
- Ensure our premises, facilities, services and information are accessible
- Addressing disadvantage

9.6 Ensure that our employment practices and policies are fair and accessible:

- Review current employment policies and amend to ensure they meet the requirements of the new Act

- Ensure that equalities are included in PDP, management and induction training
- Tailoring training provision in order to improve implementation
- Measure, understand and learn from current outcomes in employment practice

9.7 Increase engagement, involvement and representation of equality groups

- Review our practices against the standards of engagement for all consultation and involvement
- Ensure all policy development offers opportunities for equality groups to contribute

9.8 Create a culture in the Council that promotes equality, and demonstrates that discrimination and harassment on equality grounds will not be tolerated:

- Awareness raising and training for staff and members
- Continue to contribute to the Highland Community Planning Partnership Equality and Diversity group
- Continue to work with partners to improve the recording of hate incidents
- Implement the Violence Against Women Strategy

9.9 Demonstrate the continued progress of the Council to meet its public sector duties.

- Produce single equality scheme and review monitoring and reporting mechanisms in line with new duties
- Revise all policies and equality impact assessment process in line with the new duties and embed action planning within Service Plan process
- Produce single equality scheme for the Education Authority and review monitoring and reporting mechanisms in line with new duties
- Dissemination of information to support the single equality scheme
- Develop performance framework for the single equality scheme

10 PROCUREMENT AND GRANT FUNDING

10.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that equalities considerations are taken into account in the procurement process, and also in Service Level Agreements and grant funding to the voluntary sector and community groups.

The Council's Contract Standing Orders describe our approach to procurement and to promoting equality and can be found at <http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A268CC9C-C91>

There is a review of the Council's approach to grant funding which will ensure equality issues are considered in applications.

11 PREPARING AND IMPLEMENTING THE SCHEME

11.1 The Highland Council's first Single Equality Scheme is developed as a working draft building on its existing approach to improve access to employment and services. It was developed taking account of input from the Council's equalities working group who have been involved in development of each of the earlier

three schemes (Race, Disability and Gender). Training for this group was provided during the development of each scheme to raise awareness of each new duty as they were introduced. Each of three schemes has been continually reviewed and updates of progress provided. In addition, new sub-groups have strengthened some elements, in particular around gathering of information and equality impact assessments.

- 11.2** To develop the draft Scheme, we have taken account of the views and involvement of equality groups – across all protected characteristics where available, progress against the actions in the three schemes, updated data and information, and links to existing performance management frameworks. In addition, the Council's Senior Management Team and Service management teams have used the Best Value 2 self-assessment framework in the Autumn of 2009. The results were used to inform this draft single equality scheme.
- 11.3** To implement the new scheme the Council will take the steps set out in the action plan and will put into effect its arrangements for gathering and making use of information. The cross-services working group will meet regularly to report on progress and will maintain links with the Senior Management Team and Service Management Teams.
- 11.4** The Council will continue to work actively in partnership to involve a wide range people and stakeholders in the preparation of schemes, and with its Community Planning Partners on equality issues. Review and development of the scheme and its associated action plan will be an ongoing and flexible process, and comments will be welcome at any time.
- 11.5** To finalise this draft, between June 2010 and April 2011, it is intended that further consultation is carried out and new guidance being prepared by the Equality and Human Rights Commission for the introduction of the Equality Act and the new public sector duty applied.
- 11.6** The Council has committed to the development of a draft single equality scheme in advance of the new public sector duties due to come into force in 2011. The final scheme will be complete in accordance with the Codes of Practice and guidance that will accompany the Equality Act 2010. This scheme has a high priority and relevance for equality issues and although it is anticipated to have positive outcomes for equality groups, a full EQIA will be carried out before completion.

In the meantime, we will ensure that the present reporting and review requirements are met, and will take account of any changes in legislation and strategic developments in the preparation of subsequent schemes.

12 ANNUAL REPORTING

- 12.1** At present, The Highland Council has agreed to a twice yearly progress on performance across all equality schemes to its Resources Committee. These reports include details of information gathered and action that has been taken as a result of the analysis of the information and incorporate annual progress reports and three yearly reviews. Progress reports are available on the Council's internet with the Minutes and Agendas, and at

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/livinghere/equalopportunities/>

Equalities issues are also reported regularly to the Council's Senior Management Team. The Council will also continue to include report on progress on equalities in the SOA and its Corporate Plan.

13 PUBLISHING THE SCHEME

- 13.1** The scheme is published on the Council's internet (www.highland.gov.uk), and will be available in a range of other formats on request. A summary of the scheme will also be published.

14 HIGHLAND COUNCIL: THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY

14.1 Highland Council has over 40,000 pupils educated in 29 secondary schools, 187 primaries, 145 nursery units and 4 special schools. As an Education Authority, the Highland Council promotes inclusion and equality of opportunity, recognising the diverse needs of children, young people and families. Schools and other educational establishments within Highland provide a welcoming, caring and supportive environment.

14.2 We have improved the quality and quantity of information gathered on equality grounds in schools and will further develop systems to analyse and monitor information. This will help us further develop our capacity to identify those in need of support at the earliest opportunity.

14.3 In addition, we will assess how well our existing policies have impacted on children, young people and families in Highland. This will inform the development of our service in the future. In particular, we will involve children, young people and families in discussion about how we can work with them to reduce barriers to equality and increase opportunities for their involvement.

14.4 In particular, we will take account of the forthcoming integrated duty on the public sector and bring our existing commitments to gender, race and disability equality together and include the new protected characteristics.

As an Education Authority, the Council has a Race Equality Policy

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/C7CBB009-09D5-4C2B-B005-4C215D7D00F3/0/raceequalitypolicy.pdf>

Identified commitments and actions on [disability equality](#) and [gender equality](#).

During 2010 – 2011, a single equality scheme will be produced by the Education Authority.

14.5 The schemes also link closely with the Council's duties under the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Records) (Scotland) Act 2002, the Additional Support for Learning arrangements and the schools' bullying and anti racist procedures

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/8C82D65D-F879-4477-A8A6-80756BCE6D5B/0/antibullyingantiracistprocedureschoolsnew.pdf>

14.6 As well as being covered in their own right by the specific equality duties, Education Authorities also have duties in relation to schools under their management. Schools are expected to gather information on, and consider the effects of their policies and practices and the educational opportunities available to, and on the achievements of, pupils in respect of disability, gender and race. A range of information is already gathered by the Education Authority and reported to the Scottish Government.

14.7 The views of young people and families are sought by the Education Authority in development and delivery of relevant services. Young people and their families have been asked about the barriers to inclusion of young people in education, culture and sport. They have informed a number of policy and practices including transitions guidance, a Developmental Coordination Support Pack, and Getting it

Right for Every Child, Bullying and anti racist policy. Young people's views are also represented through Highland Youth Voice, Youth Forums and a range of voluntary sector bodies.

- 14.8** All public services for children are planned, monitored and delivered through an integrated approach with community planning partners and with the engagement of children's' representatives and children and young people themselves. The Community Plan for children. [For Highlands Children](#), sets out the services to be delivered and the outcomes to be achieved. Schools are an important part of the Council's services for children and the equality requirements on education authorities and schools will be fully integrated with this process and included in the revised FHC3.

Single Equality Scheme: Draft Action Plan 2010 - 2011

It is proposed that, until further guidance is available on the new public sector duties, the five key objectives from the previous three schemes will remain in place for 2010 – 2011. The revised action plan builds on and continues earlier activities. Where there are common activities across all or some of the protected characteristics these have been combined. Further work will be undertaken to streamline and prioritise actions and relevant actions from the previous separate schemes will be rolled forward.

Key Objective 1: Deliver accessible services and to treat customers fairly and with dignity and respect

Measure or action	Equality Strand	Lead Service(s)	Performance Management Reference	How will we know
Policy development ensures that equality issues are considered through equality impact assessments (EQIAs), accessibility guidance, equalities monitoring guidance and information gathering	All	CEXO	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5	All new and reviewed policies are assessed
Services provided directly and service procured, commissioned and grant-aided are accessible and treat our customers with dignity and respect	All	Finance CEXO ECS SW	1.6, 1.7, 1.8	Procurement contracts, grant awards take account of equality duties
Ensure our premises, facilities, services and information are accessible	Race; Disability	CEXO P & D ECS TEC	1.9, 1.10. 1.11. 1.12, 1.13, 1.14, 1.15, 1.16, 1.17, 1.18, 1.19	Increase in the number of premises that are accessible. Increase in the number of ESOL learners Web site maintains WAI AA. Monitor provision of interpretation
Addressing disadvantage as it affects equality groups	All	CEXO SW H & P ECS	1.20, 1.21, 1.22, 1.23, 1.24, 1.25, 1.26, 1.27	Increase in the number of customers reached with money advice and welfare rights. Increase no. of houses suitable for older and disabled people.

				Women and men are supported through Early years activities
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Key Objective 2: Ensure that our employment practices and policies are fair and accessible

Measure or action	Equality Strand	Lead Service	Ref.	How will we know
Review current employment policies and amend to ensure they meet the new Act	All	CEXO	2.1, 2.2, 2.3	Policies comply with Equality Act 2010. Maintain Double Tick symbol
Ensure that equalities are included in recruitment and selection, PDP, management and induction training, and continue with Women in Management programme. Tailor training provision in order to improve implementation - consider case to make mandatory Develop staff networks with partners.	All	CEXO	2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8,	Increase in the number of lead officers undertaking recruitment and selection training. At least one network meeting per year.
Measure, understand and learn from current outcomes in employment practice through SPIs, workforce monitoring and employee survey	All	CEXO	2.9, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12	Publish annual report on staff equalities monitoring. Annual increase in the number and proportion of the highest paid earners.

Key Objective 3: Increase engagement, involvement and representation of equality groups

Measure or action	Equality Strand	Lead Service	Ref.	How will we know
Review our practices against the standards of engagement for all consultation and involvement	All	CEXO	3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6	Increase in number of staff attending training on

including the public performance survey.				Standards of Community Engagement. Increase in customer satisfaction in PPS.
Ensure all policy development offers opportunities for equality groups to contribute using a range of methods and maintaining a list of contacts.	All	CEXO	3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11	Demonstrating equality groups are involved in policy development.

Key Objective 4: Create a culture in the Council that promotes equality, and demonstrates that discrimination and harassment on equality grounds will not be tolerated

Measure	Equality Strand	Lead Service	Ref	How will we know
Awareness raising through including equality and diversity issues in a range of media information and continue training for staff and members	All	CEXO	4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8	Annual increase in the number of staff who have attended E & D training by at least 300. Equality issues are included in the Big Picture. Twice yearly partnership E & D newsletter
Continue to contribute to equalities work with the Highland Community Planning Partners and work with other partners including other local authorities and the Equality and Human Rights Commission	All	CEXO	4.9, 4.10,	Representation at meetings
Develop Hate Incident reporting and recording including work with third party reporting organisations, promotion of the Hate Free Highland campaign and monitoring reports.	All	CEXO	4.11, 4.12, 4.13,	Increase in the number of reported incident, but ultimately reduce the occurrence of hate incidents and crimes.
Implement Violence Against Women Strategy, and continue to play an active role in the partnerships strategy	Gender	SW	4.14, 4.15, 4.16, 4.17,	Increase in the number of HC staff participating in

group, raise awareness through training and actions to protect women, children and young people			4.18, 4.19, 4.20	VAW training
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Key Objective 5: Demonstrate that the Council continues to meet its public sector duties

Measure or action	Equality Strand	Lead Service	Ref	How will we know
Produce single equality scheme and review monitoring and reporting mechanisms in line with new duties, and prepare for the introduction of the Equality Act.	ALL	CEXO	5.1, 5.2, 5.3	Single equality scheme published and review mechanisms in place.
Implement new EQIA process and revise all policies and equality impact assessment process in line with the new duties and embed action planning within Service Plan process and to ensure equalities are embedded in service plans	ALL	CEXO	5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7	EQIA screenings are monitored and assessments are published.
Produce single equality scheme for the Education Service and review monitoring and reporting mechanisms in line with new duties	All	ECS	5.8	Single equality scheme for education published
Dissemination of information to support the single equality scheme to SMT, committee, also through and HC and Highland Life Websites, and continue work with partners. Investigate mechanisms to more fully engage members on equality issues.	All	CEXO	5.9, 5.10, 5.11	Reports twice a year to SMT and Resources Committee. Involvement in partner activities related to Equality. Up to date information on websites
Develop performance framework for the single equality scheme	All	CEXO	5.12	Recording, monitoring and reporting of annual progress will be carried out through new electronic system.

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- ¹ The Equality Review, 2007
 - ² Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
 - ³ Disability Discrimination Act 2005
 - ⁴ The Equality Act 2006
 - ⁵ The difference in the median hourly earnings of all men and all women, both full-time and part-time. Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2009.
 - ⁶ Creating an age-friendly society, Government Equality Office 2009
 - ⁷ The School Report: the experiences of young gay people in Britain's schools, Ruth Hunt and Johan Jensen , Stonewall Publication 2007.
 - ⁸ Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey, Jan–March 2009.
 - ⁹ Labour Force Survey, second quarter 2009
 - ¹⁰ Census 2001
 - ¹¹ Morton, J. (2008), Transgender Experiences in Scotland: Research Summary, Scottish Transgender Alliance.
 - ¹² 'Inequalities Experienced by Gypsy and Traveller Communities', a literature review 2009
 - ¹³ Population estimates GROS 2008 mid year estimates
 - ¹⁴ Strengthening the Highlands, The Programme of The Highland Council 2009-2011
 - ¹⁵ The Highland Council Corporate Plan, 2009 - 2011
 - ¹⁶ The Highland Single Outcome Agreement, July 2009
 - ¹⁷ The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, Best Value Guidance, Scottish Executive 2003
 - ¹⁸ Draft Joint Community Care Plan 2009-2012
 - ¹⁹ Highland Council Workforce Management Plan, August 2008
 - ²⁰ High Level Summary of Equality Statistics: Key Trends for Scotland 2006
 - ²¹ Equality Measurement Framework, EHRC 2009
 - ²² Guidance on Involving Disabled People and the DED, DRC, 2006