



E Q U A L



OPPORTUNITIES

**SERVICE DELIVERY
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY
AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

HIGHLAND COUNCIL EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

Version 1
04 March 2004

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Equal Opportunities is defined in the Scotland Act 1998 as:
“the prevention, elimination, or regulation of discrimination between persons on the grounds of sex or marital status, or racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions.”
- 1.2 Equal opportunities means recognising that there are barriers that can prevent some people from fully participating in community life, in employment, and from having equal access to services.
- 1.3 Equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are central to the goals and values of the Highland Council. This policy sets out the Council’s commitment to providing equal access to its services for everyone in our communities, whether delivered directly or in partnership with others, and how we will seek to identify and overcome barriers.
- 1.4 In adopting this policy the Highland Council is affirming the commitment in its Corporate Plan to tackling disadvantage wherever it arises and striving for equality of access to services. Developing an equal opportunities policy and an associated implementation plan will promote long term change and build consideration of equal opportunities into the every day work of the Council and its services. The Council believes this approach is in the best interests of all in the area, and will help to promote the Highlands as a safe, inclusive and accepting community, where people will want to live, work in, to visit and invest in.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

- 2.1 **The Council’s equal opportunities aims are to:**
- Provide services that meet the needs of all communities in Highland
 - Promote equal opportunities and tackle discrimination
 - Be a fair employer
 - Meet its legal obligations under relevant legislation
- 2.2 This policy document focuses on service delivery and complements the Council’s existing Equal Opportunities Policy in Employment which sets out its responsibilities as an employer.
- 2.3 In implementing this policy, the Council will work towards ensuring that people in the communities of the Highlands have equal access to services regardless of personal characteristics, and to tackling discrimination and disadvantage. Groups particularly at risk of feeling alienation from society or of being unable

to make their voices heard by services providers include:

- People with disabilities and specific health issues
- Women
- People from minority ethnic communities, including Gypsy/Travellers
- Asylum seekers and refugees
- People from different religious beliefs or faiths
- Young people and children
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people
- Older people
- Carers
- Single parents
- Low paid and unemployed people

The Council recognises that some individuals may experience issues of multiple discrimination across more than one of the equality strands.

2.4 The Council will aim to ensure that

- equality is central to service provision and will aim to include equal opportunities objectives in all its corporate and service plans, and
- that these objectives will be reflected in policies and procedures. Services will be required to integrate equality into the service planning process and report on progress. A planned approach to equality will result in delivering quality services that respond to the needs of communities and individuals.

In this way, equal opportunities will not only be included in the every-day work of the Council, it will also be part of the Council's Performance Management Framework where areas for continuous improvement are identified and measured.

2.5 The Council will progress and develop equal opportunities strategies alongside other connected initiatives including Best Value, Digital Highland, Working with Communities, the Social Inclusion Partnership, Community Safety, the Joint Health Improvement Plan, the Highland Community Plan and the Council's Race Equality Scheme.

2.6 The Council has a wide and increasing range of legal responsibilities placed upon it to ensure that people are not discriminated against or disadvantaged in the delivery of services and in employment. Should the Council fail to meet these responsibilities it could be subject to costly and potentially embarrassing legal action. UK and European legislation provide a framework to eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity. However, complying with legislation is merely a starting point and the Council will aim to adopt best practices and continually improve services in ways that are sensitive to the needs of all sections of the community.

2.7 **The Objectives of the Council's Equal Opportunities policy are:**

- To ensure "mainstreaming" of equal opportunities – this means making equal opportunities central to service provision through the Council's Corporate Plan and Service Plans and becoming part of every-day activities.
- To develop and foster consultation on equal opportunities and more direct

engagement with communities of interest, building on the Council's Working with Communities Strategy and including joint working with our partners in the Wellbeing Alliance and other statutory and voluntary agencies.

- To ensure the Council complies with the statutory requirements of equal opportunities legislation and adopts best practice to ensure access to services and information.
- To ensure that the Council's partners, contractors and others who deliver services on its behalf are aware of, and operate in keeping with, its commitment to equal opportunities.
- To ensure that recipients of grant aid support from the Council operate in keeping with the commitment to promoting equality of opportunity.
- To promote and raise awareness of employees and the public of equality of opportunity and the unacceptability of discrimination.
- To encourage a culture that values the diversity of people in the Highlands and responds to the needs of individuals. As a major employer and service provider the Council has an important leadership role to promote fairness, respect, tolerance and social inclusion.
- To meet the commitment in the Council's Corporate Plan to being open, fair and accountable.

2.8 The Council will make its Equal Opportunities policies widely available. The policies and associated actions will be regularly reviewed and monitored.

3. COUNCIL SERVICES

3.1 The Highland Council provides a wide range of services to all communities in its area. These are services which, one way or another, affect everyone who lives, works, studies or visits the area ranging from refuse collection, school provision, money advice, community care, housing, Council Tax and rates collection, planning applications and many others.

3.2 The Council is continually striving to improve and develop its services to ensure efficient delivery to the public in all of its eight Areas. This includes meeting new challenges in making some services available electronically, and also providing a high standard of customer care.

3.3 The Council will strive to ensure that it provides the same access to services to everyone in its communities, a particular challenge when delivering services across the wide, and sometimes sparsely populated, areas of the Highlands.

4 WORKING WITH PARTNERS

4.1 Adopting a partnership approach to equal opportunities is important; this includes working with other statutory agencies, with the voluntary sector and community groups. Increasingly the Council works in partnership with other local agencies in planning and delivering services.

- 4.2** The first Highland Community Plan produced in 2000 set out a vision and proposed actions for the key public agencies in the Highlands, together with the private and voluntary sectors under the partnership of the Wellbeing Alliance.
- 4.3** The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 provides a statutory underpinning for mainstreaming equality in the implementation of duties in Community Planning, as well as Best Value and the Power of Well-Being. The Act includes equalities as a cross-cutting theme and requires that local authorities, in their duty to initiate and facilitate Community Planning, should report on equal opportunities actions that have been taken to comply with these duties on behalf of Community Planning partnerships.
- 4.4** Mainstreaming equality is central to the duties in Community Planning, along with meaningful engagement with communities which embraces co-operation and participation to improve planning and delivery of services and making them more responsive to local needs.

5 IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1** In implementing this Policy the Highland Council aims to ensure that equal opportunities becomes part of mainstream service delivery. To take this forward, an Implementation Plan has been developed to set out specific actions against which progress can be measured.
- 5.2** Implementing this policy will require commitment from all Council Services and will involve working closely with Community Planning partners and with the Highland community. The Council will aim to ensure good communication between Services to share best practice.
- 5.3** As a requirement of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Council produced its first Race Equality Scheme in November 2002 – the Act places a duty on public bodies to promote race equality, good race relations and eliminate discrimination, and audit all its public services to ensure that they are meeting the new duties. Producing the Race Equality Scheme has provided a framework for addressing other equality issues.
- 5.4** The Implementation Plan sets out the actions required to put the objectives of the Policy into practice to ensure equality of access to services and information.
- 5.5 Meeting the objectives in the implementation plan:**
- **Ensuring mainstreaming of equal opportunities**
Through commitments in the Corporate Plan and Service Plans the Council will ensure that consideration of equal opportunities is part its every day activities and will work towards achieving equal access to service delivery. Services will be required to measure progress against specific actions and to consider where improvements can be made. Progress will also be identified through Best Value Reviews.
 - **Developing consultation on equal opportunities and working with**

partner agencies

The Council's Working with Communities Strategy sets out the framework and provides guidance on improving community participation and seeking the views on what services are needed in which areas, who needs them and how they can be improved. A number of the groups included in the equalities strands are considered "hard to reach" and may face particular barriers in making their voices heard. These include people who are traditionally excluded from the consultation process and may not have their views represented by identified umbrella groups.

▪ Ensuring the Council complies with equal opportunities legislation and adopts best practice to ensure access to services and information

There are a number of corporate and service specific initiatives underway or planned, including:

- Implementing the Council's Race Equality Scheme, including improving engagement with minority ethnic communities
- Improving access to services and information
- Improving access to Council premises
- Developing a Disability Strategy along the lines of the Race Equality Scheme
- Development of the Single Sensory Strategy
- Implementation and monitoring of the Education Accessibility Strategy
- Development and implementation of the Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Development of an Action Plan for the provision of Services to Gypsy/Travellers in Highland

▪ Equal opportunities and Procurement

Through the procurement of goods and services the Council has an opportunity to influence a range of other organisations and promote equal opportunities. An immediate priority is to ensure that the Council's procedures comply with recent guidance from the Commission for Racial Equality.

▪ Equal opportunities and Grant Aid support

The Council's work with voluntary organisations and the provision of grant aid also provide an opportunity to promote, raise awareness of, and ensure commitment to equal opportunities. There is a requirement on the Council to meet the duties of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 where there is an agreement with an organisation to carry out functions on behalf of the Council; and the Disability Discrimination Act has implications for all organisations providing services and employing staff.

▪ Promoting and raising awareness of equality of opportunity

The provision of training and awareness on equal opportunities for all employees and Council Members is a key priority. All Council employees will be made aware of the policy and its implications. This will be carried out through staff inductions, training, and awareness raising.

The policy will be promoted to employees, Members and the public, it will be on the Council's Intranet and internet, and information will be available in

alternative formats on request.

▪ **Encouraging diversity and taking a leadership role in equal opportunities**

The Council will aim to promote a culture that values the diversity of its community and will work with Community Planning partners to encourage equality of opportunity.

6 MEETING THE COUNCIL COMMITMENT TO BEING OPEN, FAIR AND ACCOUNTABLE.

6.1 The Council will monitor and review its equal opportunities policies and practices on a regular basis.

6.2 Reviews will be undertaken as follows:

- At corporate level the implementation will be reviewed by the Council's Equalities Group. The Equalities Group is a sub-group of the Senior Management Team and is chaired by the Director of Corporate Services.
- At Service level through annual Service Plan process
- As part of Best Value Reviews
- Through public performance surveys
- Through complaints procedures
- Through consultation with the public in line with Community Planning requirements and the Council's Working with Communities Strategy.

7 RESPONSIBILITY

7.1 The Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team are ultimately responsible for ensuring that services are delivered equitably and without discrimination.

7.2 The Chief Executive and Service Directors are responsible for implementing the policy and ensuring equality issues are included and mainstreamed within Service Plans.

7.3 It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive and Service Directors to ensure that employees are aware of the policy and that they act in accordance with its principles and are provided with necessary support and guidance to do so.

7.4 The Council's Equalities Group meets regularly and has responsibility for ensuring that corporate equalities issues are addressed, that reports go to appropriate committees and for monitoring equalities provision and progress in service plans.

7.5 The Council's Equal Opportunities Officer provides support to services.

7.6

All employees and Members of the Highland Council have a responsibility to ensure that the principles of equal opportunities are applied in all aspects of their work, and that no actions are taken which could be held to be discriminatory.

APPENDIX 1 Equal Opportunities Legislation

1 KEY EQUALITY LEGISLATION

1.2 [The Sex Discrimination Act 1975](#)

The Sex Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sex against individuals in the areas of employment, education, the provision of goods, facilities, services and in the disposal or management of premises. It also prohibits unlawful discrimination in employment against married people.

1.3 [The Sex Discrimination \(Gender Reassignment\) Regulations 1999](#)

These regulations extend the Sex Discrimination Act to prohibit discrimination where an individual intends to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment (creating a new sexual identity). They are restricted to treatment in the workplace or in relation to vocational training, and not in the provision of goods and services.

1.4 [The Race Relations Act 1976](#)

The Race Relations Act 1976 makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin.

1.5 [The Race Relations \(Amendment\) Act 2000.](#)

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 strengthens and extends the 1976 Act. It places a new positive general duty on public authorities to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good race relations between people of different racial groups. The Act also contains specific duties to ensure the delivery of the general duty. All relevant public authorities must:

- assess all functions and policies, or proposed policies for relevance to the general duty;
- assess and consult on the likely impact of proposed policies on the promotion of race equality;
- monitor their policies for any adverse impact on the promotion of race equality;
- publish the results of their assessments and consultation;
- ensure public access to information and services;
- train staff in connection with the new duties.

1.6 [The Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#)

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 protects disabled people in the areas of employment, the provision of goods, facilities and services and the selling, letting or managing of land or premises. The Act also requires that employers and service providers make “reasonable adjustments” to accommodate the needs of disabled people. Under the Act a disabled person is defined as anyone:

‘with a physical or mental impairment which has substantial and long-term adverse effect upon their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.’

1.7 [The Equal Pay Act 1970](#)

The Equal Pay Act makes it unlawful to discriminate between men and women in their contracts of employment including pay, holiday entitlement, pension etc.

It gives an individual a right to the same contract, pay and benefits as a person of the opposite sex in the same employment, where men and women are doing like work, where work is rated as equivalent and when work is proved to be equal.

1.8 [The Employment Equality \(Sexual Orientation\) Regulations 2003](#)

These regulations came into force on 1 December 2003 and for the first time offer protection for workers from discrimination and harassment on the grounds of their sexual orientation.

1.9 [The Employment Equality \(Religion or Belief\) Regulations 2003](#)

These regulations came into force on 2 December 2003 and for the first time offer protection for workers from discrimination and harassment on the grounds of religion or belief.

1.10 [Human Rights Act 1998](#)

The Human Rights Act was introduced to allow cases concerning the rights given under the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) to be brought in the UK courts. It also ensures that domestic legislation is interpreted in a way that is compatible with the Convention rights. It applies to all public authorities, making it unlawful for such bodies to violate Convention rights and placing a duty on public authorities to ensure that respect for human rights is integral to their work. A very broad range of rights is covered by the Act, from the right to life and prohibition of torture, to the right to respect for private and family life and prohibition of discrimination.

2 **Developments in Equalities legislation**

2.1 Equality legislation has been in place since the 1970's, however recent Government initiatives such as the new general duty in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 have emphasised the importance for local authority action to address equal opportunities.

2.2 Equality legislation and the definitions used are continually developing. The [Race Relations Act 1976 \(Amendment\) Regulations 2003](#) implement the EC Article 13 [Race Directive](#). The Regulations enhance the Race Relations Act by, for example, amending the definition of indirect discrimination and changing the way in which the burden of proof applies, as well as removing a number of exceptions from the legislation. The recent Employment Regulations mentioned above were introduced to enforce the [EU Employment Directive 2000](#), also under Article 13 of the EC Treaty of Amsterdam. In addition to sexuality, religion and belief, the Employment Directive incorporates matters related to disability and age, which must be in force by October 2004 and December 2006 respectively.

2.3 There are moves to amend the current set up of Equalities Commissions in the

light of updated legislation. In October 2003, the Government confirmed proposals for the establishment of an Equality and Human Rights Commission to replace the existing bodies. A single body is expected to be established in 2006, and consideration will need to be given to the relationship between any new body and the proposed Scottish Human Rights Commission.

- 2.4** Equalities legislation is a reserved issue for the Westminster Parliament; however the Scottish Parliament has given the Scottish Executive the power to encourage equal opportunities. The Scottish Parliament has accepted the broad definition of equalities in the introduction to this document.
- 2.5** The Scottish Executive's Equality Strategy highlights the need for provision of services that better meet the needs of all the community and the need to promote equal opportunities and tackle discrimination.

3 [The Local Government Act \(Scotland\) 2003](#)

- 3.1** The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 is a key aspect of the Scottish Executive's modernisation agenda for local government. The measures in the Act give Local Authorities more responsibility to act within an appropriate framework, to work in partnership with other bodies and the communities they serve, and to embed a culture of quality, equality and improvement.
- 3.2** The Act:
- provides a statutory underpinning for mainstreaming equality in the implementation of duties in Community Planning, Best Value and the Power of Well-Being.
 - Local Authorities, assisted by those bodies subject to a duty to participate, are responsible for facilitating the process by which the Community Planning partnership observes equal opportunity requirements and encourage equal opportunities.
 - Section 17(1) of the Act requires that local authorities in their duty to initiate and facilitate Community Planning should, on behalf of Community Planning partnerships, report on actions that have been taken to comply with these duties.

Useful Contacts

Commission for Racial Equality
(Scotland)
The Tun
12 Jackson's Entry
off Holyrood Road
Edinburgh EH8 8PJ
tel 0131 524 2000
fax 0131 524 2001
textphone 0131 524 2018
email scotland@cre.gov.uk
<http://www.cre.gov.uk>

Disability Rights Commission
DRC Helpline
FREEPOST MID02164
Stratford upon Avon
CV37 9BR
Telephone: 08457 622 633
Textphone: 08457 622 644
Fax: 08457 778 878
<http://www.drc.org.uk/>

Equal Opportunities Commission
Scotland
St Stephens House
279 Bath Street, Glasgow
G2 4JL
Email: scotland@eoc.org.uk
Fax: 0141 248 5834
Tel: 0845 601 5901
<http://www.eoc.org.uk/>

Scottish Executive
Equality Unit
Scottish Executive
Area 2F- South
Victoria Quay
EDINBURGH EH6 6QQ
Tel: 0131-244 0123
Fax: 0131-244 1824
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk>

Equality Network
22 Forth Street
Edinburgh EH1 3LH
Tel 07020 933 952
Fax 07020 933 954
email: en@equality-network.org
<http://www.equality-network.org>

Age Concern Scotland
Leonard Small House
113 Rose Street
Edinburgh EH2 3DT
Tel: 0131 220 3345
Fax: 0131 220 2779
E-mail: enquiries@acscot.org.uk
<http://www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk>

The Scottish Inter Faith Council,
The St. Francis Centre,
405 Cumberland Street,
Glasgow G5 0SE
Tel: 0141 429 4012
<http://www.interfaithscotland.org/>

Further Information

The following documents can be obtained from the Highland Council and are on the Council's website <http://www.highland.gov.uk>

- [The Highland Council Corporate Plan](#)
- [The Highland Council Equal Opportunities Policy \(Employment\)](#)
- [The Highland Council Working with Communities Strategy](#)
- [The Highland Community Plan](#)
- [Wellbeing Alliance Community Safety Strategy](#)

For further information, or to request this document in an alternative format eg, **large print**, Braille, computer disk, audio tape, or suitable language, please contact:

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IV3 5NX

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Fax 01463 702830
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Equal Opportunities Policy Implementation Plan

04 March 2004

What do we want to achieve?

1. To ensure “mainstreaming” of equal opportunities

Through commitments in the Corporate Plan and Service Plans the Council will ensure that equalities is part its every day activities and will work towards achieving equal access to service delivery. Services will be required to measure progress against specific actions and to consider where improvements can be made. Progress will also be identified through Best Value Reviews.

| | How will we achieve it? | Where are we now? February 2004 | What action is needed | Responsible person (s) or service | target date |
|-----|---|--|--|---|---|
| 1.1 | Inclusion of specific equalities targets in the Corporate Plan | Equalities is included as actions under the Corporate Plan; in the Council's Goals and Values and in the Code of Corporate Governance. | Consider Equal Opportunities at each review of the Corporate Plan | Chief Executive | annually |
| 1.2 | Services to make a commitment to equal opportunities in Service Plans and identify actions to take forward | Services now all include equalities within Service Plans and guidance has been issued. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equalities to be included in Service Plan templates • Further develop guidance and checklists for Services on equalities • Monitor Service Plans for inclusion of equal opportunities and measure progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Directors • Equalities Group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually • Sept 04 • Annually |
| 1.3 | Ensure equalities issues are included in all Best Value Reviews in line with Local Govt Act guidance | Equalities guidance is included in the Best Value toolkit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor Best Value reviews for equalities | Best Value team | Every corporate review on an ongoing basis |
| 1.4 | Developing an equal opportunities policy which clearly states the Council's commitments to equality in service delivery | Draft of policy and implementation plan completed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider consultation • To Council | Equalities Group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nov 03 – Feb 04 • March 04 |
| 1.5 | Assessing Council policies to ensure equalities are considered | Draft policy assessment tool being tested. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete policy assessment tool. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equalities Group | Sept 04 |

| | How will we achieve it? | Where are we now? February 2004 | What action is needed | Responsible person (s) or service | target date |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| | in decision making as required by the RRAA | Work on joint policy assessment checklist. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertake assessments as required by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Directors | On completion of assessment tool – ongoing |

What do we want to achieve?

2. To develop and foster consultation on equal opportunities and more direct engagement with communities of interest, building on the Council’s Working with Communities Strategy and including joint working with our partners in the Wellbeing Alliance and other statutory and voluntary agencies.

The Council’s Working with Communities Strategy sets out the framework and provides guidance to improving community participation and seeking the views on what services are needed in which areas, who needs them and how they can be improved. A number of the groups included in the equalities strands are considered “hard to reach” and may face particular barriers in making their voices heard.

| | How will we achieve it? | Where are we now? February 2004 | What action is needed | Responsible person (s) or service | target date |
|------------|--|--|---|--|--------------------|
| 2.1 | Improving the involvement of all sectors of the community in planning and delivering services, and in feedback on services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public Performance survey includes equalities monitoring ▪ Working with Communities strategy and consultation guidance and training in place, both include equalities information ▪ Best Value reviews must ensure consultations are inclusive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase work with WBA partners and others ▪ Develop effective and co-ordinated consultation with hard to reach groups ▪ Ensure all community groups are taken into account in consultation ▪ Continue to raise awareness of consultation and equalities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All staff involved in consultation ▪ Policy Unit and Training | ongoing |

| | | | | | |
|------------|--|---|---|--|--------------------------|
| | | | | and Developmen t Unit | |
| 2.2 | Improved mechanisms for consulting | Through the Working with Communities Strategy and consultation guidance, staff are already asked to consider using a variety of methods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop database of contact for hard to reach groups ▪ Use existing groups, including HCCF and H & I equalities forum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equalities Group ▪ All staff involved in consultation | Sept 2004 ongoing |
| 2.3 | Improve information on our communities | Some general quantitative information is readily available, eg Census information. Some communities of interest have been hard to reach, but progress is being made | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equalities monitoring to be undertaken when appropriate during public consultation ▪ Support and develop contact with existing representative groups | All staff involved in consultation | ongoing |

What do we want to achieve?

3. To ensure the Council complies with the statutory requirements of equal opportunities legislation and adopts best practice

There are a number of corporate and service specific initiatives underway or planned to meet the requirements of legislation and adopts best practice to ensure access to services and information. The Council is committed to improving access to services and premises, as well as access to information on its policies and services for all in its community. This will include taking equal opportunities issues into account in the Council's Digital Highland project which is committed to improving the quality of services and the ways they are delivered to customers

| | How will we achieve it? | Where are we now? February 2004 | What action is needed | Responsible person (s) or service | target date |
|------------|--|--|---|---|---|
| 3.1 | Progress the implementation of the actions identified in the | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheme agreed by Council and published 4 Dec 2002. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions to be implemented | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Directors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing |

| | How will we achieve it? | Where are we now? February 2004 | What action is needed | Responsible person (s) or service | target date |
|------------|--|---|--|--|---|
| | Council's Race Equality Scheme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheme identified specific action to meet the general and specific duties of the RRAA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Scheme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equal Opps Officer and Heads of Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 2004 |
| 3.2 | Implementing the recommendations of the Racist Incident Strategy in the Council and in partnership with WBA and others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy approved by Council and WBA partners • Working identified to progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree protocols and procedures • Identify associated training needs | Community Safety and Health Improvement Officer | Aug 04 |
| 3.3 | Identified need for a single coherent strategy for sensory services in Highland | Multi-agency/disciplinary short term working group and sub-groups established to progress | First working draft of the strategy to be produced | Head of Operations (Criminal Justice & Central Services) | March 2004 |
| 3.4 | Legislation requires all Education Authorities to develop an Accessibility Strategy for disabled children | Strategy produced Aug 2003 | Actions to be implemented and strategy to be monitored | Director of ECS | Ongoing |
| 3.5 | Development and implementation of the Domestic Abuse Strategy | Multi-agency Highland Strategy has been developed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of the strategy • Development of service action plans | Community Safety and Health Improvement Officer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2004 • During 2004 |
| 3.6 | Develop a disability strategy to incorporate policy, service delivery and employment issues | proposed | Steering group to be established and timetable set | Chair of Equalities Group | April 04 |
| 3.7 | Information produced by the Council is able to meet the needs of all in the community, for | Support is provided to staff as needed Guidance for staff in draft form. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information to be available in alternative formats and languages on request | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing |

| | How will we achieve it? | Where are we now? February 2004 | What action is needed | Responsible person (s) or service | target date |
|-------------|---|--|---|--|--|
| | instance providing information in alternative formats on request. | Working with Customer Services Manager to ensure provisions are in place so staff are aware of guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify providers, put procedures in place and produce guidance for staff ▪ Publicly state information is available in alternative formats on request ▪ Monitor use and quality of services provided | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equalities Group ▪ All Services ▪ All services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ March 04 ▪ Ongoing ▪ ongoing |
| 3.8 | Ensure enquiries and complaints procedure is accessible to all | Enquiries and complaints procedure has been reviewed and is being piloted in Ross & Cromarty, equalities and discrimination issues included. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The enquiries and complaints procedures will be reviewed following the pilot and rolled out to other areas ▪ Equalities monitoring will be included in monitoring customer satisfaction levels | Customer Services Manager | April 04 |
| 3.9 | Ensure access to translation and interpreting services | Telephone Interpreting is available through National Interpreting Service Information on local translators and interpreters is being updated in partnership with Northern Constabulary and NHS Highland. Where language skills not available locally, information is available on services elsewhere | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Put procedures and protocol in place for access to translation and interpreting provision ▪ Provide guidance to staff on the range of options and how to use them | Equal Opps Officer and Customer Services Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ April 04 ▪ April 04 |
| 3.10 | Digital Highland to mainstream equalities in its programme of improvements of access to information on Council Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equalities issues are considered in the pilot Service Centre. ▪ Equalities monitoring is included in CRM system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider equalities in all processes | Head of e-Government | ongoing |

| | How will we achieve it? | Where are we now? February 2004 | What action is needed | Responsible person (s) or service | target date |
|-------------|---|--|---|--|--|
| 3.11 | Ensure information on the Council's website is accessible | Webmaster has produced good practice guidance notes for staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Follow good practice guidelines for current site. ▪ Include equalities considerations and the needs of users into the development of new site | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Any staff inputting information ▪ Head of e-Government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ongoing |
| 3.12 | Improving access to Council premises in line with the requirements of the DDA through a planned programme of audits and work. | Two phases of audits have been completed by Property and Architecture and Building Control staff. Consultation has taken place internally and 3 consultation meetings with communities of interest. Budget confirmed and consultants commissioned. The second phase is underway. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Services to be informed of progress and requirements of the DDA through SMT and Resources Committee ▪ Programme of work to continue, including consultation ▪ Where applicable and appropriate, alternative ways of providing services to be considered | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Director of Corp Services & Property & Arch ▪ Service Directors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing ▪ Ongoing |
| 3.13 | Addressing issues faced by Gypsy/Travellers to accessing services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highland Gypsy/Traveller partnership group ▪ Local Fora in Lochaber and Inverness ▪ Support to Health and Wellbeing of Gypsy/Travellers initiative ▪ Support to Lochaber Routes project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of a Council Action Plan to improve services to Gypsy/Travellers in Highland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equal Opps Officer and Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ End March 2004 |

4. What do we want to achieve?

To ensure that the Council's partners, contractors and others who deliver services on its behalf are aware of, and operate in keeping with, its commitment to Equal Opportunities.

| | How will we achieve it? | Where are we now? February 2004 | What action is needed | Responsible person (s) or service | target date |
|------------|--|--|---|--|--------------------|
| 4.1 | An equalities statement is included in procurement process as required by the RRAA | Procurement Manager has amended an existing clause for standard documents. A number of Service Level agreements currently contain equalities requirements. | Further consideration to how equalities will be included in the procurement process | Procurement Manager and Service Directors responsible for contracts. | By July 2004 |

5. To ensure that recipients of grant aid operate in keeping with the Council's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity

| | How will we achieve it? | Where are we now? February 2004 | What action is needed | Responsible person (s) or service | target date |
|------------|--|--|---|---|--|
| 5.1 | Ensure that recipients of grant aid are aware of the Council's commitment to equal opportunities and that they themselves adopted the Council's approach or similar in delivering the services for which they are receiving grant aid. | A number of agreements already ask for information on equal opportunities policies from organisations. | Carry out scoping exercise of services providing support for inclusion of equality statements. Ensure that organisations are made aware of the Council's commitment to Equal Opportunities in any agreements for support, and that they are in a position to confirm that they have equal opportunities policies covering employment practices and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equalities Group ▪ Service Directors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sept 2004 ▪ During 2004 |

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| | | | service delivery as appropriate. | | |
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| | | | | | training course |
| 6.4 | Development of PDP process to take on board EO competencies | | | TDT | March 2005 |
| 6.5 | Equalities training and awareness raising for Council Members | | | TDT | Following development of one day training course |
| 6.6 | Ensure staff are aware of new equal Opportunities Policy | Staff have been consulted on development of plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ publish service delivery policy – hard copy and electronically ▪ publish leaflet ▪ inform service management teams | Equalities Group | Following adoption of policy (March 2004) |
| 6.7 | Promote equalities commitments and actions | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop mechanisms for delivery and communicate to the public on how the Council will deal with accessible information, racist incidents, etc | Equal Opps Officer with appropriate service staff | During 2004 |

7. What do we want to achieve?

To meet the commitment in the Council's Corporate Plan to being open, fair and accountable.

The Council will monitor and review its equal opportunities policies and practices on a regular basis. Reports will be made to the Equalities Group and to appropriate Committees.

| | How will we achieve it? | Where are we now? February 2004 | What action is needed | Responsible person (s) or service | target date |
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| 7.1 | Improved base of information and implement effective monitoring of equal opportunities in service delivery Identify appropriate performance indicators Report annually on progress and identify equalities commitments in service plans | Some equalities monitoring undertaken in some services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve information on composition of the community, using 2001 census information and other sources ▪ Where appropriate collect and compile equalities data using monitoring form | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equalities Group ▪ All Services | During 2004 As required |
| 7.2 | Ensure members, staff and members of the public are informed of equal opportunities progress | Equalities issues are reported to various Council Committees. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish a mechanism for regular reporting to Council on equalities ▪ Develop mechanisms for reporting to staff on equalities on a regular basis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equalities Group | During 2004 |
| 7.3 | Include reporting of equalities issues as required by Statutory Performance Indicators, Community Planning and in Public Performance Reports | SPIs are reported on an annual basis. Public Performance Reports include equalities issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meet the new requirement in Community Planning to report on equalities issues ▪ Continue to report on SPIs ▪ Continue to include equalities in Public Performance Report | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Head of Policy ▪ Director of Finance ▪ Head of e-Government | annually |
| 7.4 | Monitor implementation plan | | Review progress | Equalities Group | annually |

8. To encourage a culture that values the diversity of people in the Highlands and responds to the needs of individuals. As a major employer and service provider the Council has an important leadership role to promote fairness, respect, tolerance and social inclusion.

| | How will we achieve it? | Where are we now? February 2004 | What action is needed | Responsible person (s) or service | target date |
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| 8.1 | Equalities Group will promote and raise awareness of equalities issues, share good practice, and contribute to the development of equal opportunities policy | Established 2001 and meets regularly. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widen membership to all Services • Define remit of the group | Chair of the Equalities Group | ongoing |
| 8.2 | Leadership commitment from Council Members | Equal Opportunities spokesperson re-appointed following 2003 elections | None at present | Equalities Group | |