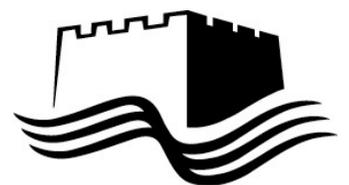


Tower Hamlets Council

Gender Equality Scheme and
Action Plan 2007 – 2010



TOWER HAMLETS

Table of Contents

Foreword by the Leader	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Background to gender equality issues	5
General Duty & Specific Duty	
How we developed our scheme	
Structure of our scheme	
3. The Council's values and priorities	7
4. Gender Priorities	7
5. Employment	18
6. Consultation	20
7. Procurement	22
8. Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan	22
9. Reviewing and reporting progress	30
Appendix 1: Arrangements for evidence gathering	32
Appendix 2: The Council's programme for Equality Impact Assessments	33
Appendix 3: Best Value Performance Indicators: Gender Equality	38

Foreword

Equalities and diversity has been a central commitment of the Council for many years. Our achievements have been recognised through beacon awards and achieving the highest level of the Equality Standard for Local Government. But we are not complacent and know that we need to continue improving services. The Gender Equality Scheme – that meets our duties under the Equality Act 2006 - is another step forward.

We know that gender is important and results in different experiences and outcomes. Our Gender Equality Scheme is about recognising this and then taking action to improve things.

The Scheme and Action Plan is based on the issues highlighted through our consultation with women, men and transgender people, as well as the issues highlighted through service monitoring. It includes safety, access, employment, health, learning and employment. This is important as it makes sure that we are concentrating on the issues that will make the greatest difference to local people.

The Council is also the borough's community leader and we take this responsibility seriously. We work with many organisations right across the borough and we will use our influence with them to promote gender equality, particularly through the Tower Hamlets Partnership.

We will report back on our progress each year, so that you know what progress we are making and can hold us to account.

Cllr Denise Jones
Leader of Council

1. Introduction

The Council's vision and the vision of the Tower Hamlets Partnership is to improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in Tower Hamlets. We want a thriving community in which people feel at ease with one another, benefiting from higher levels of achievement and increasing employment opportunities, where people experience a higher standard of living and good health and enjoy a safe and accessible environment together with a wide range of cultural, leisure and learning opportunities. Our inclusive vision is of a community that draws strength from its differences. We want to eliminate any barriers that prevent people accessing the opportunities and life chances on offer. We want to engage with all our communities to celebrate their rich diversity and also to work through the tension that this diversity can sometimes bring.

The Council's aim is to make sure equality for men, women, girls and boys is at the centre of its work when developing a policy or strategy, providing a service, or employing people. Tower Hamlets Council's Gender Equality Scheme shows how the Council will ensure that it eliminates sexual discrimination and harassment and promotes equality for all in order to meet the Gender Equality Duty.

We recognise that women and men will often have different needs and expectations from services and use them in different ways. We must therefore ensure that men and women have equal access to services and that gender roles are not stereotyped on the basis of their biological sex. We also acknowledge the need to pay equal regard to all the other diversity strands when considering gender and to appreciate that individuals have a multiplicity of needs, backgrounds and aspirations which cannot be answered by reference to gender alone. To this end we aim to work toward proactively putting in place policies and services which enable everyone to access our services regardless of their gender roles and to improve outcomes for all.

The Structure of our Scheme

The Scheme is broken down into eight sections:

- Section one introduces the scheme
- Section two outlines the Duty and our requirements
- The third section provides a brief introduction to the Council's values and priorities
- The fourth section sets out the priorities that have emerged from the consultation feedback and research
- Section five sets out how we intend to address the Duty in terms of Employment
- Section six sets out the findings from the consultation process
- Section seven explains our procurement processes
- The eighth section outlines the Council's Action Plan to meet the requirements of the Gender Duty
- The ninth section is a summary of how we will review and inform future Schemes
- Appendix 1 highlights the evidence the Council gathers to assess the impact of its policies and services
- Appendix 2 outlines the Council's equality impact assessment process
- Appendix 3 sets out Performance Indicators relevant to gender equality

2 Background to gender equality issues

The General Duties

The Gender Equality Duty is the biggest change in sex equality legislation for thirty years and is designed to help women, men, girls and boys. When the Duty comes into force on the 6th April 2007, public authorities will have to take action to eliminate sexual discrimination and harassment and to promote equality for women and men.

The Equality Act 2006 amends the Sex Discrimination Act (1995) and places a statutory duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need:

- to eliminate discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- to eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Equal Pay Act 1970
- to promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

This Duty is different from previous sex equality legislation in two crucial aspects:

- (i) public authorities have to be proactive in eliminating discrimination and harassment, rather than waiting for individuals to take out harassment cases; and,
- (ii) public authorities have to be proactive in promoting equality of opportunity, and not just avoiding discrimination.

Furthermore, the duty requires authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment against transsexual people in the fields of employment and vocational training. This will be extended later this year to require us to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment against transsexual people in services too.

The Specific Duties

The specific duties of the Gender Equality Duty require us to comply with a number of requirements.

We must prepare and publish a Gender Equality Scheme (this document) which shows how we intend to fulfil the general and specific duties and that sets out our gender equality objectives.

In preparing the scheme we must consult employees, service users and others (including trade unions), take into account information that is relevant to how our policies and practices affect gender equality in the workplace and in delivery of our services, and in formulating our objectives to consider the need to have objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap.

We must ensure that our scheme sets out actions that we have taken or intend to take to gather information on our services and how we will use the information to assess the impact of our policies on gender equality as well as consulting relevant people to ensure the scheme's objectives are met.

We must implement our scheme within three years of publication and then review and revise our scheme at least every three years, but report progress annually.

How we developed our Gender Equality Scheme

The development of our Scheme has been led by the Equalities Team. This has been supported by officers from the Corporate Equalities Steering Group (CESG) who are the key equalities representatives from each Directorate. The development of the scheme has followed a clear project plan, the steps of which are outlined below:

Gathering Baseline Information

A comprehensive baseline exercise was undertaken using a combination of desk based research and input from staff across the Council. Key activities that were undertaken included:

- gathering demographic information on the borough's population
- identification and analysis of local and national research to understand the broad issues affecting women, men, girls and boys
- liaison with all Directorate teams to identify further statistics and information to help identify differences between men and women
- analysis of existing consultation exercises to identify areas of differing importance for men and women
- a review of existing Equalities Impact Assessments (EqIAs) to identify issues highlighted as being of importance for gender equality
- a review of our existing performance indicators to establish current performance and performance compared to other local authorities

Consultation Exercises

From the baseline information we were able to identify a number of areas for further examination and discussion. To test our findings and to gain further input as to which areas should be our priorities we undertook a number of consultation activities:

- met with key members of local voluntary, statutory and community organisations to seek their views on the areas of importance
- held a number of focus groups with local residents
- attended a number of events throughout International Women's Week
- regularly liaised with the CESG
- held seminars with senior management and Divisional Management Teams to identify key issues of importance during January and February
- attended Staff Forums
- liaised with Trade Unions - ongoing
- published articles in Member's and Manager's bulletins and on the staff intranet to seek the views of staff members

Setting Priorities and Objectives

Using the feedback from our consultation and baseline exercises, a number of key themes for priority and overarching activity have emerged. These overarching themes have shaped the structure of the scheme and action plan. In some instances, further work is required to develop and identify key issues and working arrangements in order to achieve real long-term outcomes. To accompany this, further consultation will be required with residents, community groups and staff in order to inform continually the development of the scheme and actions.

3. The Council's values and priorities

The Council's vision is to improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in Tower Hamlets. This involves helping to create a thriving, achieving community in which people feel at ease with one another, have good learning and employment opportunities, experience a higher standard of living and good health, and enjoy a safe and an attractive environment together with a wide range of cultural and leisure opportunities.

The Council has five key priorities:

- **A Better Place for Living Safely** – reducing crime, making people feel safer and creating a more secure and cleaner environment
- **A Better Place for Living Well** – improving housing, health and social care and promoting healthy living
- **A Better Place for Creating and Sharing Prosperity** – bringing investment into the borough and ensuring that all our residents and businesses are in a position to benefit from and contribute to growing economic prosperity
- **A Better Place for Learning, Achievement and Leisure** – raising educational aspirations, expectations and achievement, providing the widest range of cultural and leisure opportunities for all and celebrating the rich diversity of our communities
- **A Better Place for Excellent Public Services** – improving public services for local people to make sure they represent good value for money and are provided in ways that meet local needs

Diversity and equalities falls within the Excellent Public Services theme which is a crosscutting priority running across all Council services.

4. Gender Priorities

This chapter sets the overarching themes which have been identified from our baseline exercise and throughout the consultation process. A total of 7 overarching themes have emerged and within each theme a number of specific action areas have been identified.

An overview of gender issues

It is worth highlighting some of the evidence that demonstrates some of the different issues faced by women, men and transgender people.

Most women still have very different life experiences from most men. For example:

- Whilst women now make up nearly half of the workforce and although men's role in caring for children is growing, women still take on the majority of care for children.
- In England this year, there were 4.5 children under the age of eight for every formal childcare place.
- Women and men have different working patterns. 44% of working women work part-time, compared to only 10% of men. Women often take breaks from paid work to care for others. For many, this results in limited career progress, lower pay and reduced pensions. Women pensioners' incomes are just 57% of men's.
- Even when both partners work, women still do the majority of the domestic work.
- Even if caring and domestic roles were shared more evenly, women and men would still have distinctive needs, for example in their health and in their personal safety.

- Women use transport at different times, in different ways and for different reasons from men, both to get to work, and to access services, childcare and food shopping.
- One quarter of all violent crime in Britain is domestic violence, and two women are killed every week by their partners and ex-partners.
- Overall, girls are outperforming boys in school, but their success is not translating into better pay and jobs.

Because women's lives are different from men's, they need different things from public services. Meeting their needs often means changing the content of services and how they are delivered.

But there are significant issues for men, boys and transgender people too:

- Men are sometimes reluctant to use public services that they see as irrelevant to their needs. For example men are still less likely to go to their GP and therefore less likely to identify health problems early on.
- They are also much less likely to be involved in their children's education.
- When they do want to be involved as fathers, services that have been designed for women can make men feel unwelcome such as toddler and baby classes
- Facilities such as baby changing rooms are often in women's areas of leisure centres/shops, making them inaccessible for men.
- Men and women want to be able to balance work and caring responsibilities, yet British men work the longest hours in Europe.
- Four in ten mothers and one in ten fathers have left or turned down a job because of childcare responsibilities.
- Press For Change has estimated that there are 5,000 transgender people in the UK.
- Issues such as access to single sex facilities (e.g. toilets and changing areas), dress codes, changing personal details and harassment are all issues which are particularly important for transgender people.

This highlights just some of the different issues faced by women, men and transgender people and the importance of action to promote gender equality.

Local gender issues

The following section outlines the overarching themes and areas for action that have emerged from the baseline and consultation to date, and explains why such actions are considered important. These areas have shaped the action plan which accompanies this scheme as outlined in section 7.

Theme 1: Crime, Violence and Anti-Social Behaviour

Area 1: The need for effective Domestic Violence services which are culturally appropriate and fully accessible

Several consultation activities with staff and residents identified the need for continued action to reduce the incidents of domestic violence and the requirement for greater culturally appropriate domestic violence services. Evidence indicates that domestic violence remains a significant concern accounting for approximately 25% of all violent crime in the borough (2004/05). In 2005/06 there were a total of 690 incidents of domestic violence, of which 94% involved a female victim. Local data also highlights the low levels of access by certain groups potentially due to language, cultural and service issues (particularly Bangladeshi women and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community). The impact on individuals and the community

cannot be over-emphasised - this type of crime is the second most common reason for homelessness in the borough, and is a key feature in the background of about a third of children on the “at risk” register.

There are a number of other crimes which disproportionately affect women ranging from cultural issues such as honour killings and forced marriages to more universal issues such as rape and other sexual offences. When these issues are analysed by ethnicity, there are particular implications for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women.

Area 2: The need to develop gender and culturally appropriate responses to anti-social behaviour activities

Feedback from residents indicated that there is a need to provide further support for women (particularly those from BME communities) who have drug and alcohol problems. Tower Hamlets has over 200 chaotic drug users with dual diagnosis in treatment at any one time. Bangladeshi women present to drug services in disproportionately small numbers – their engagement with drug services is generally as a result of social services intervention. Several reasons have been suggested for this, including the large number of Bangladeshi men using services, and fears that they will be identified as drug users within their communities. Male Bangladeshis using heroin now account for at least 50% of the treatment population in Tower Hamlets. The majority of these are under the age of 26 and can be described as having non-complex needs.

The under-representation of women in the use of the service has been well documented and actions including the development of a women’s only service is in progress. Residents felt that more needed to be done to reach those more marginalized communities in ways that were culturally appropriate and that maintained their anonymity within the community.

Whilst women are more likely to be victims of domestic violence and other sexual offences, young men are more likely to be both the victims and perpetrators of violence and most other types of offences. Tower Hamlets has one of the largest youth offending populations in the country and there are a significant number of initiatives within the borough designed to combat youth crime and to provide support for young victims¹.

Young people aged 10-17 years currently make up 11% of the borough’s total population. Between April 2000 and September 2001, the reference period for the Crime Audit, this group committed 26% of the borough’s recorded crimes. Data shows that this percentage has been decreasing over the intervening period. Between January and December 2001, 25.2% of crimes were committed by youths (compared to a London average of 24.6%).

However, in the same period in 2002, the Tower Hamlets figure had decreased to 18.3% (compared to a London average of 20.5%). 25% of victims of youth crime were aged between 25 and 34 years and 20% were other youths. The majority of victims (67%) were male and 47% were White European, with 20% being Asian and 6% being from Black African/Caribbean backgrounds. National statistics show that boys are more likely to be involved in youth crime than girls.

¹ LBTH Youth Crime Reduction Strategy 2003

Area 3 Female Offenders

Evidence from the consultation findings and from research indicates that issues around female offending could be part of this scheme. In Tower Hamlets local police estimate that around 250 women are involved in street based prostitution in the borough. Between April – August 2006, a total of 49 men were arrested for kerb crawling, with most falling within the 21-40 age categories and 94% of them being charged with the offence for the first time. In an average year, there are around 100 arrests of women for soliciting or loitering in the borough.

Evidence from the Metropolitan Police reveals that there are significant differences in the types of crimes committed by men and women in the borough. For the period Jan-Dec 2006, the biggest single reason for female convictions was theft from shops (followed by Actual Bodily Harm, Harassment, Common Assault and Possession of drugs). This was quite different when compared to men, where the most common reason for conviction was possession of drugs. This reinforces national research which indicates that women's involvement in crime is often related to issues of poverty rather than violence.

Theme 2: Access to buildings and services

Area 4: Consider gender issues in the physical design and development of facilities / services

In many instances men and women's needs are not considered in the way services, buildings and facilities are designed. Feedback from residents highlighted several physical access issues that they felt prevented them from equally accessing and engaging in certain activities. These included the design and lay-out of buildings, in particular access to baby changing facilities (for men as well as women), safety concerns both whilst at buildings and when travelling to and from facilities such as lighting and safe routes, as well as the design of buildings for men and women with children such as heavy doors and entrances with steps.

Local evidence highlights the importance of ensuring gender issues are considered in physical developments. The borough has a very low rate of vehicle ownership compared with the national average (43.2% of Tower Hamlets households have a vehicle compared with 73.2% of households in England). Women are also more likely than men to walk or use buses for their main means of transport, making fewer journeys and travelling shorter distances on average than men. Despite this, services are often not developed around women's transport routes, but more around commuter services into and out of major centres. Enforcing unlicensed minicabs was highlighted as a concern in the Local Implementation Plan in order to protect lone women travelling at night.

Evidence suggests that the fear of harassment or assault may stop women from fully participating in activities outside their homes. In the year ending August 2002, a total of 214 sexual offences, including 54 rapes, by the drivers of illegal minicabs were reported to the Metropolitan Police Service. The actual number of offences is likely to be much higher, as Home Office studies suggest that only one in five victims report this kind of assault.

Area 5: Consider gender issues in the operation and day-to-day delivery of services
The consultation exercises highlighted some very practical issues in the delivery of services which they felt led to barriers for women and men in accessing services. Key issues included a need to consider the timing of services to allow men and women to participate, the location of activities (particularly with regard to safety, accessibility, and the provision of certain services such as crèches and appropriate baby changing facilities). Linked to all of these was a desire

on the part of the participants to ensure that services were culturally appropriate and that whatever service was on offer catered for those whose first language wasn't English.

Area 6: Ensuring women and men have access to safe and appropriate housing
Whilst not specifically highlighted through consultation, local data would suggest that housing and homelessness are areas where gender issues need to be considered. The high cost of housing and women's lower average incomes mean that women-headed households have less choice in the housing market. Nationally, women are less likely than men to head households in the owner occupied and private rented sector and are consequently more dependent on council and other social housing. Over half of households headed by women in the social rented sector are lone parent households – again demonstrating the impact of low incomes on housing choice.

Whilst reduced choice in the housing market is an issue for many women, homelessness is a particular issue for men. The Housing Needs Survey 2003/04 identified that of 908 new service users who were single homeless between April 2003 to March 2004, only 9 percent were women, indicating a greater need for housing for single men, who often fall outside of the statutory housing requirements. Research would further indicate that young boys and girls make-up a significant proportion of the London homeless population and this has been reflected in the Council's Homelessness Strategy as an area of increasing priority for the borough. Older men and women and members of the LGBT community can suffer further disadvantage in the housing market through a fear of harassment.

Theme 3: Health Inequalities and Health Promotion

Area 7: Improving the life expectancy of women and men in the borough
In Tower Hamlets, life expectancy is lower than the national average. For the period 2002-2004, life expectancy in Tower Hamlets was 73.9 years for men, and 79.2 years for women. As for the previous period, Tower Hamlets had amongst the worst life expectancy for men in the whole country. In the Census 2001, 17% of residents reported a limiting long-term illness. There is no significant difference between men and women across all age ranges.

There are more people recorded as diabetic and alcohol related hospital stays and numbers in drug misuse treatment is high. Causes of ill health vary by gender. Men are more likely to suffer from coronary heart disease, diabetes, or commit suicide while women are more likely to suffer from hypertension and depression. Young lesbians and gay men are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than other young people, suggesting the need for effective support mechanisms and networks for these people.

According to the Public Health Report (2005) the smoking rates for both Tower Hamlets (37%) and for men in the borough (43%) are among the highest in England. The highest prevalence of smoking was in men aged 25-44. In 2005/06, 4.8% of all pregnant women in Tower Hamlets were recorded as smokers at delivery, with the highest prevalence seen in mothers aged less than 20 years. Smokeless tobacco is known to be prevalent amongst the South Asian population in the borough. It has been reported that 19% of Bangladeshi men and 26% of Bangladeshi women have used some form of oral tobacco, with one report showing prevalence of oral tobacco use amongst East London Bangladeshi women of 49%.

Death rates associated with alcohol are higher in Tower Hamlets than in the rest of the country. The death rate is significantly higher for men, a pattern that is seen nationwide. In general women using drug and alcohol services need to feel safe and protected and this was echoed by

participants at the consultation events as an issue which they felt needed to be given greater consideration, particularly in terms of providing culturally appropriate services.

Mental illness has also been highlighted through the research as an issue which may require further work. There are approximately 20–30 deaths each year in Tower Hamlets from suicide or undetermined injury. The overall death rate from suicide and undetermined injury is higher locally (for both men and women) than for the rest of the country, and follows the well-recognised pattern of higher death rates in men than in women.

Area 8: Teenage Pregnancy

The UK has the highest teenage pregnancy rates of all European Countries. Research shows that teenage mums are less likely to finish their education and get a decent job. They are also more likely to become single parents and live in poverty. Their children are at greater risk of poor health and of becoming teenage mothers themselves. Young fathers face barriers of inappropriate support mechanisms. In 2004, there were 174 conceptions in girls aged under 18, a rate of 43.2 per 1,000 females aged 15-17, which is only marginally higher than the rate for England as a whole. 59.3% of these conceptions led to a termination of pregnancy. Overall, the under-18 conception rate in Tower Hamlets has fallen dramatically since 1998, with the largest decreases in London being seen in Tower Hamlets, Kensington & Chelsea, and Hammersmith & Fulham².

Area 9: Improving access to health services

Evidence from consultation indicated that many women were concerned with a number of health issues. Access to appropriate maternity services was mentioned, although further work is required to identify the specific issues around this topic. They also highlighted some of the difficulties that women from particular communities can face when trying to access health services generally such as a lack of understanding of the system, of their entitlements and of the language. The role that local community and voluntary organisations play in this process was highlighted and many felt that the vital role that such organisations held within their communities could be further developed with more secure/long-term funding.

There is also widespread national and regional evidence of the need to engage greater numbers of men in taking more responsibility for their health. National figures indicate that men are far less likely to attend GPs and other primary care establishments, often leading to late diagnosis of certain health conditions. It has been identified that greater health promotion work is required with men to encourage them to seek help earlier.

Area 10: Isolation issues

Age Concern estimates that at least 1.7 million single older men could be living in isolation in the UK. Nearly 400,000 of these are single older men aged 75 and over. Furthermore it is estimated that 289,000 single older men are living in poverty.

Older men's lack of social links and contacts makes them even more vulnerable to isolation in old age than women. Many older men also lack, or never have learnt, practical skills such as shopping or cooking and may find themselves at a loss if they have a partner or parent who dies before them. This is particularly telling for white, black and mixed-race older men who are more likely to suffer social isolation than Asian and Chinese men who tend to have better social networks through their cultural traditions.

² Tower Hamlets Public Health Report, 2005

When the figures are examined by sexuality, older lesbians, gay men and bisexuals are 2½ times as likely to live alone; twice as likely to age as a single person; and, 4½ times as likely to have no children to call upon in times of need

Theme 4: Economic Inactivity and Employment

Area 11: Improving economic inactivity rates across the borough (particularly Bangladeshi women and men)

Poverty is more likely to affect women than men. In 1998/99, 31 per cent of women of working age in London were living in low income households, compared with 26 per cent of men. For pensioners, the proportion went up to 45 per cent of women and 40 per cent of men. London has the highest proportion of lone parent households reliant on Income Support (65 per cent) of any region in the country. Over nine in ten lone parent households in London are headed by women. Four out of ten lone mothers in London are black and minority ethnic women, primarily from black Caribbean and black African backgrounds. Analysis suggests that higher costs in London, particularly of housing and childcare, create a greater disincentive for lone parents to move into work.

As at June 2006, there were 148,300 working-age people in Tower Hamlets (78,400 men and 69,900 women). There were a total of 87,100 economically active individuals and 52,300 economically inactive individuals. Of those who were economically inactive, 51% were women (25% men). Tower Hamlets experiences unemployment rates that are not only amongst the highest in London, but across England and Wales.

Unemployment rates vary considerably across the different ethnic groups in Tower Hamlets. According to the 2001 Census, Bangladeshis had the highest unemployment rates, exceeding 40% in those aged under 25.

There is also a great disparity in the levels of unemployment between women of different religions. Muslim women are the most likely (15% unemployed) likely to be unemployed, with Christian women the least. Unemployment rates for women in the other religious groups were between 5% and 11%³.

Area 12: Improve the economic well-being of older men and women

In 2001, a quarter of pensioners in London, rising to 36 per cent in Inner London, were living in low-income households, defined by the government as below 60 per cent of median incomes after housing costs. Pakistani and Bangladeshi households are far more likely than other groups to be living in poverty⁴.

Nationally, 18 per cent of women and 14 per cent of men are caring for at least one person who is sick or disabled. The estimate for London was slightly lower than the national rate. Women are more likely than men to be caring for someone outside their own household, to be the main or sole carer and to be spending 20 hours a week or more caring.

Sixteen per cent of people aged over 65 are caring for one or more relative or friends who are sick or disabled, either in their own household or outside it. The peak age for caring is 45 to 64 with 24 per cent of people in this group being carers. Twenty-eight per cent of those aged 65

³ Engaging with Muslim Women - A Report from the Prime Minister's Event 10 May 2006

⁴ GLA

and over and 40 per cent of those aged 45 to 64 spend at least 20 hours each week caring for others. This does not include the number of older people looking after grandchildren, or other young relatives. The shortage of affordable childcare, particularly acute in London, means that older relatives often fill the gaps in a complex juggling act by parents.

Area 13: Flexible working for men and women and access to suitable childcare
Women still overwhelmingly take the responsibility for childcare, even where both they and their partners are working. The scarcity of affordable and suitable childcare is a major barrier to women's employment, particularly for lone parents. Furthermore, the majority of lone parent households are headed by women with some minority ethnic groups more likely to experience lone parenthood. For example, almost half of black households in Britain with children are headed by a lone parent⁵. The Greater London Assembly's London Household Survey 2002 cited the lack of suitable or affordable childcare as the major reason stopping women from working, whereas for men the major reasons were lack of suitable jobs and illness.

Area 14: Address any potential gender inequality in pay
The pay gap – the difference between men's and women's average earnings - is wider in London than in Britain as a whole. In 2001 hourly earnings for women working full-time averaged only 77 per cent of men's in the capital, compared with 81 per cent in Britain. Part of the reason for this is the gender difference in employment, with more women in the poorest paid jobs, but even within the same occupation there are wide differences.

At 76 per cent nationally, the pay gap is wider amongst managers than any other occupational group. Both men and women have lower average earnings in manual occupations than non-manual ones. On average white women in London earn 14 per cent more than black and minority ethnic women, with women from Asian backgrounds earning the least. Most pension schemes deny survivor benefit schemes to gay and lesbian partners

Area 15: Opening up traditionally male/female occupations
There is still a large amount of segregation in the kinds of jobs women and men do. While women have been successful in making inroads into many previously all-male preserves, they only represent a small proportion of the total number in certain traditional areas. For example, less than two per cent of fire fighters in London are women; in 2001 10% of Chief Executives in England and Wales were women (36 out of 351 local authorities); only 16 per cent of nursery and primary teachers and seven per cent of nurses in England and Wales are men, but 42 per cent of nursery and primary school heads are men. Women carry out nearly 60 per cent of personal services jobs, many of which are low-paid and casual.

Theme 5: Improve achievement, inclusion and participation of girls, boys, women and men in children's well-being, education and personal development

Area 16: Improving educational outcomes and addressing underachievement of boys
Amongst younger age groups, girls are out-performing boys and more young women are going on to higher education than men. There are also differences between boys and girls with regard to Statements of need, exclusions and Social Inclusion Panels.

As at 2005, the total school population was 35,727 pupils with a gender split of 51.39% boys and 48.61% girls. When the results are analysed by gender it reveals that at Key Stage 1 in

⁵ Homes for London's Women, GLA 2001

2006, 78% of Boys achieved the required level in reading, 74% in Writing, 87% in Maths and 83% in Science. For girls the proportion achieving required levels was higher with 86% in reading, 84% in writing, 90% in Maths, and 87% in Science. At Key Stage 2 for the same year, 75% of Boys achieved the expected level in English, 79% in Maths and 84% in science. For girls 85% achieved the expected level in English, 77% in Maths and 88% in science. Finally, for Key Stage 3, 53% of Boys achieved the expected level in English, 66% in Maths and 55% in science. For Girls the corresponding achievements were 73% in English, 65% in Maths and 56% in science. Overall, in 2006, the GCSE attainment split showed that 50% of Boys and 60% of Girls achieved grades 5+ A*-C.

Of the total school population, 1,593 pupils had Statements accounting for 4.45% of the total numbers of pupils. This is disproportionately made up of boys (68%) as opposed to girls. When this data is looked at by ethnicity, the biggest percentage of Statements have been given to Bangladeshi children (47.5%) followed by white British (28.9%).

Referrals to out of school and social inclusion panels reveal a further difference by gender. For the year 2004/05, 63% of boys and 37% of girls were referred. When considered by ethnicity, White British made up the greatest proportion (47.49%) followed by Bangladeshi (28.68%).

Exclusions from schools also follow a similar trend. For the year 2005/06 a total of 887 boys compared to 347 girls were permanently excluded from school. This pattern has held true for all the years examined and would indicate there are particular issues for boys around exclusion.

Involvement of parents by gender in their children's education and well-being varies by gender. Information from the Children's Information Service for 2005/06 revealed that 90% of respondents to a questionnaire of users were women. Furthermore, information in various EqlAs has revealed the lower use of children's centres by men.

Nationally, the availability of suitable childcare and nursery spaces is a considerable issue and was one of the big issues to come out of consultation with residents. Issues such as cost, availability, culturally appropriate services and location were all raised as key barriers by the majority of women. From a small sample exercise of 10 settings offering nursery education, approximately 48% of places were taken up by girls compared to 52% of places taken up by boys, indicating a slight variance by gender and something which may require further investigation using a bigger sample.

Area 17: Improving the participation of young girls and women in leisure, learning and other activities

The consultation revealed the desire by many women to engage with leisure and other activities more frequently. However, they cited the lack of women only provision as a barrier to their increased participation as well as a lack of female tutors/lifeguards and teachers contributing to the problem.

This issue has been highlighted in many EqlAs across a variety of services. Local evidence suggests that women participate more in lifelong learning courses across the board compared to men and that this reflects the national trend. Men are particularly under-represented in fashion/textiles courses, have a better representation amongst visual arts and music and there have been some recent improvements in areas such as dance (due to changes in marketing and course content). In terms of curriculum areas of Health, Cookery, Sport and Fitness, female learners outnumber male learners and reflect the trend nation-wide. Changes to the

publicity and marketing that included images of men on courses traditionally female dominated like health and complementary therapies appear to have improved enrolments on health courses especially at FE level. Examples of curriculum to attract female learners include women only exercise, varied health and parent and child swimming and cookery. The only areas where men appear to outnumber female learners are in ICT and Modern Languages.

Feedback from the consultation also highlighted the need for courses to be held at appropriate times and locations which were accessible and safe. Furthermore, a key concern for women was the availability of affordable and culturally appropriate childcare to enable them to attend courses and training. It was their view that this was one of the biggest barriers to their participation in a whole host of activities.

Local information demonstrates the very low take up of young girls and women in youth services. Figures for the last financial year reveal that between the ages of 11-12, females account for half the number of men attending the same services. For those participants aged 13-19 this figure drops to 25% of participants being female. It drops even further between the ages of 20-25, where only 10% of participants are female. Reasons for this have been cited as a reluctance to allow young girls/women to participate in activities too far from home, a focus on male activities at the centres (due to the lower take-up by girls) as well as others.

Area 18: Examine ways that men and transgender people can become more involved in children's education and well-being

The involvement of fathers in children's education has been shown to be very beneficial to educational attainment and social development. Anecdotal information would suggest that fathers participate less in their children's education than mothers across the UK and that this is also the case in Tower Hamlets.

There are many existing LGB parents who have children and are facing discrimination and homophobia. It is essential that schools recognise this issue and ensure that these parents are able to play the same role in school life that other parents do, and that the children of these parents, regardless of their own emergent sexuality, are not affected in any way by bullying from other children or negative attitudes from school staff or other parents.

Theme 6: Participation in Public Life

Area 19: Improving the representation of women in democratic processes and positions of influence

Feedback from consultation highlighted the need to improve the numbers of women in democratic positions and positions of influence such as Councillors, Board Members and Senior Officers. The evidence gathered to date affirms these views. Tower Hamlet's political make-up demonstrates that women account for less than a quarter of all Councillors (24.5%) with 12 women to 39 men. Membership of Local Area Partnership Steering Groups are also comprised predominantly of men with membership of Bangladeshi women particularly lacking. Further national research suggests that women in senior positions within organisations continue to be under-represented. In 2001 twelve per cent of local authority chief executives in England and Wales were women and seven per cent of chief constables. In the civil service, 22 per cent of the highest grades were held by women, compared with 50 per cent in the total workforce. Women continue to be under represented in senior management positions, forming only 33 per cent of managers and administrators and less than seven per cent of directors on the boards of the FTSE top 100 companies. Only one in five hospital consultants are women. The Council

monitors the top 5% of its workforce that are women. It set a target of 49% for 2006/07 and has met this target with just over 50% of the top 5 earners at the Council being women.

Feedback from the consultation exercises has highlighted the desire of many women to become more involved in a range of paid and unpaid roles within the community. They identified several barriers to increased participation including a need for greater help with learning English (better information about where to learn) and general information on where to get information on the training opportunities that are available.

Area 20: Community Cohesion Opportunities

Various women's organisations highlighted the role that women of all ages could play in helping to address and relieve community tensions. They felt that there was a real opportunity for women to come together around common issues and help communities understand and accept cultural differences.

Area 21: Further work to consult with and identify barriers for the transgender community in participating fully in public life

Further consultation work is necessary to identify issues and barriers that affect the Transgender community. Limited opportunities for consultation with this group were identified during the development of the scheme. As such, a plan of work will be developed with forums and key organisations representing transgender residents and staff to identify areas for action. This will need to be linked to an ongoing programme of consultation work across all communities to ensure continual identification and feedback on our progress.

Theme 7: Improving the Council's own monitoring arrangements, policies and procedures

Area 22: Reviewing our monitoring arrangements and existing policies for compliance with Gender Duty

In conducting the baseline exercise, it was clear that further work is required to develop our monitoring and reporting arrangements to allow a greater analysis by gender and other diversity categories. It was acknowledged both through consultation with staff and residents that many barriers affecting women or men can be further disaggregated by ethnicity, disability, sexuality etc. In order to gain a more coherent picture of gender barriers we need to develop more sophisticated monitoring arrangements across the Council and with our contractors.

Whilst the Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) that have been reviewed in the development of this scheme have assisted in the identification of particular areas for action, there is a need to provide greater advice to staff on gender issues.

The baseline exercise revealed that existing procurement guidance needed to be developed to incorporate requirements of the Gender Equality Duty. In particular, action was needed to work with contractors to strengthen the monitoring arrangements around gender.

Area 23: Employment

Further work is necessary to review the Council's existing HR procedures and policies in order to comply with the Gender Duty. The existing EqIA process has already identified many policies for review this year and it will be necessary for them to rigorously consider gender issues. There is also a need to consider the ways that data on our staff is currently gathered and analysed to give a clearer picture of our staff by gender (see action area 22 above and Chapter 6).

Area 24: Consultation/engagement and Communications and portrayal of gender roles
Many of the respondents to the consultation highlighted the need to develop effective strategies to engage with women's and men's groups more effectively. There was a desire to remain involved in the process of developing responses to the action areas highlighted through the development of the scheme as well as examining opportunities for groups to become further involved in the ongoing monitoring and implementation.

The production of the scheme highlighted the need to continue to gather more information on the groups and organisations that represent women's and men's needs. Furthermore, an ongoing programme of engagement and consultation needs to be developed to further inform the development of the action plan.

There was an acknowledgement by staff that some of the images used by the Council portrayed stereotypical views of men and women and that we needed to develop a strategy to address this.

5. Employment

Recruitment and Selection

The Council's employment policies and procedures provide a framework within which candidates are given the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities regardless of their ethnicity, gender, age, disability, religion, sexuality or employment status. This policy applies to all appointments, both internal and external, including secondment, fixed term and acting-up opportunities. All managers are required to follow the policy to achieve consistency of practice across the Council. The Council uses a range of recruitment channels (over 30 different sources).

A review of the numbers and gender of applicants revealed that the majority of applications received and short-listed are female. This pattern holds true for the numbers of applicants who are successful, with women accounting for over half of successful candidates. A more detailed analysis of recruitment activity is necessary to understand the breakdown of these applicants by job type/grade and skill level to understand any gender inequalities. This will be actioned in the first year of the scheme.

Staff at all levels have access to a full range of training and development opportunities to support them in embedding equalities in their recruitment and selection, e.g. recruitment and selection training for managers, induction training for staff and one-to-one support from HR. Further work will need to be undertaken to identify the particular issues affecting transgender applicants in the recruitment and selection process.

Working Time Arrangements

Flexible working practices was introduced as part the Government's Flexible Working Directive in 1999. Working flexibly is about providing flexible service to our customers, while considering individual staff needs. The Council has developed flexible working procedures including hot-desking, home working, staggered hours, term time and part time and job share working. The Council has developed a flexible working policy which is currently out for consultation and is with the Trade Unions. It is expected that this will be formally adopted and implemented later this year.

The number of women working full time is greater than the number of men (51% women, 49% men). However, when the figures are examined for part time working, over three quarters of those staff working part time hours are women (78%) compared to only 22% of men. Further work is required to understand the issues faced by men and women who work part time and to ensure our pay policies and practices do not discriminate against those who work part time hours.

Pay, Structures and Equal Pay

In determining pay and conditions, the Council ensures all posts are evaluated using a nationally recognised evaluation scheme. All staff are able to access information on pay structures and grading through the intranet and associated HR policies and procedures. At present, Council is in consultation with the trade unions regarding Single Status. It is hoped that agreement will be reached and single status implemented from 1 June 2007. As part of the implementation of this agreement, a new job evaluation scheme will be implemented which will be non-gender biased. Furthermore, we will carry out an Equality Impact Assessment which will provide a thorough analysis of our working structures, processes and policies covering the areas of equal work, work rated as equivalent and work of equal value.

Training and Development

The Council operates a system of personal training and personal development plans for all staff. These take place regularly and identify any training and development issues that staff may have. Team meetings, one-to-ones and other more informal working structures also ensure that staffs training needs are continually identified. There is a comprehensive internal training and development programme of courses. Initial analysis reveals that during 2005/06 the Corporate Learning and Development Team organised 219 training courses. A total of 2,245 employees attended these courses with the majority of attendees being women rather than men. Further work is required to analyse training activity in more detail and to understand the gender differences.

Promotion and Career Development

In order to ensure we are meeting the requirements of the Gender Duty it is essential that we understand the representation of women and men across the organisation and at all levels. Analysis reveals that the Council currently employs (excluding schools) a total of 5797 staff of which 61.22% are female compared to 50% of the Tower Hamlets population and 41% of the local labour market (source: Census 2001). Our Workforce to Reflect the Community Strategy set a target of 49% of top management jobs being filled by women for 06/07. As at March 2007, this target had been met and exceeded with just over 50% of top positions occupied by women.

When staff data is analysed by Directorate and gender, (from April 2006 to date) it reveals there are a higher proportion of women in clerical and caring occupations and lower paid grades such as kitchen assistants. It further reveals that certain service areas are strongly gender segregated for example, Children's Services have the highest percentage of women staff whereas Environment and Culture and Housing have greater proportions of male staff. Further analysis will be undertaken to review those areas of work which are considered to be traditionally female/male to address any potential gender segregation issues.

Further work is also planned to develop a revised brand for recruitment across both the Council and the PCT. In particular this might focus on traditional female jobs in social care and health and on opening up traditionally female roles to men and all sections of the community.

Comprehensive guidance is available on the intranet on HR policies and procedures including issues such as harassment, flexible working, pay grades/scales and how to carry out personal appraisals.

Working Conditions and Working Environment

The Council has a Combating Harassment and Discrimination Procedure that applies to all staff. This policy and procedure is used by staff where they feel it necessary. Analysis of the number of Harassment and Discrimination Complaints revealed that slightly more were received from women compared to men during 2005/06. During the baseline exercise, it was found that further work was required to enable further analysis of complaint data by gender in conjunction with other equalities strands in order to reflect the complexity of some of the issues affecting men and women.

Actions taken under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure and the Council's Sickness Management procedure are also noted. Taking these two together, there were a total of 77 disciplinary proceedings recorded in 2005/06 of which 36 involved female staff and 47 men. Further work will be necessary to analyse this information in greater detail to understand potential issues for men and women and transgender staff.

Information is also collated on redundancy and retirement across the Council. In 2005/06 a total of staff 98 staff left the Council's employment. For both women and men, the most common reason for leaving was redundancy, although marginally greater numbers of female employees were made redundant compared to men.

Information with regard to numbers of staff returning to work after parental/maternity leave is an area where we need to undertake further analysis. We need to understand whether staff are returning on a full time or part time basis and how the Council's flexible working arrangements support them at this time

6. Consultation

There are a number of surveys that are undertaken by Tower Hamlets Council which have provided information on the views of our residents. All of them analysed feedback by gender and provided us with insights into the issues that are important for men and women.

In addition to existing information, we undertook a range of consultation exercises with men and women across the borough to identify issues of importance. The consultation that was undertaken has been outlined in Chapter 2.

The findings from the consultation have been incorporated into the previous section and have shaped the structure and areas for action. Some of the key issues to have emerged were:

Service Based Issues:

From Residents/Voluntary Groups:

- Childcare provision/nursery places – culturally appropriate, affordable, accessible
- Need for flexible working arrangements
- Access to employment and training opportunities
- Need to raise awareness with men of the issues facing women in the workplace, community etc
- Access issues – physical access (buildings not designed for women),
- Service issues and access – language (availability of ESOL), lack of information, timing/location of activities, mobility
- Concerns that some groups were not getting equal access to certain facilities
- Health issues such as maternity services
- Safety – domestic violence, harassment, rape and other sexual offences
- Need for culturally appropriate services particularly for drug misuse/alcohol abuse

From Staff:

- Female economic inactivity and the impact on poverty/low income families
- Participation in public life
- Crime issues and community safety – domestic violence, female offenders, rape/sexual violence, drugs/access to drugs, forced marriages
- Gender to be considered together with other diversity strands
- General access issues for men – for example child changing facilities in women's toilets, opening hours for some services
- Think about whether the images used in communications are stereotyping
- Participation in public life
- Education and learning differences between men and women
- Lack of women participating in youth services (particularly Bangladeshi women)

Employment Based Issues:

- Reviewing HR policies and practices in light of new duty
- Promoting better representation in education and social care
- Training for workforce in basic skills
- Monitoring arrangements – own services and contracted services
- Perceptions of gender roles in certain professions

Issues for Transgender Staff/Service Users

- Issues surrounding ability and sensitivity when dealing with 'birth gender' and clarity around legal status of what is/isn't required
- Difficulties of identification – want acceptance as their adopted gender

7. Procurement

Each year the Council enters into contracts worth many millions of pounds for buying goods, works and services on behalf of the people of Tower Hamlets. As part of this, it is important that everyone working on behalf of the Council understands our commitment to equalities.

As part of good management practice, we have produced the following guidance that applies to contracts with the private, third sector and other public bodies:

- Equality and Diversity Policy Statement
- Guidance on Equalities Legislation
- Diversity monitoring categories
- Guidance for contractors
- Instructions to firms tendering
- Monitoring compliance
- Questionnaire for contractors
- Working with adverts
- Working with approved lists

Work is currently being undertaken with our procurement teams to revisit the existing procurement guidance and monitoring arrangements. As has already been identified elsewhere in this document, further action is required to incorporate the specific requirements of the Gender Duty into existing arrangements.

8. Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan

The Action plan has been developed around the themes that have been identified through consultation with local residents and staff. There are seven overarching themes together with 28 specific areas for action. The identified themes will shape the action plan as follows:

Theme 1: Crime, Violence and Anti-Social Behaviour

Theme 2: Access to buildings and services

Theme 3: Health Inequalities and Health Promotion

Theme 4: Economic Inactivity and Employment

Theme 5: Improve achievement, inclusion and participation of girls, boys, women and men in certain learning, leisure and education activities

Theme 6: Participation in Public Life

Theme 7: Improving Council's own monitoring arrangements, policies and procedures

In many instances, gender differences do not and cannot solely account for inequality in service provision/take-up or experiences of life in Tower Hamlets. Our diverse borough means that in order to obtain meaningful results, we must ensure that gender is considered alongside ethnicity, age, sexuality, disability and religion. An obvious example of where this is particularly the case is in the area of ethnicity/gender and single sex provision.

It should be noted that it is not the intention of this action plan to replicate actions contained in other equalities schemes, but it is important to consider gender issues in this wider context. As a consequence, the evidence gathered indicates that it may be necessary to re-examine the actions identified in other schemes with this in mind.

Theme 1: Crime, Violence and Anti-Social Behaviour

Ref	Objective	Action	Deadline	Responsibility
1.1	Develop Domestic Violence Services that are culturally appropriate and fully accessible	To review the Domestic Violence policy and action plan to include: (i) Support and awareness for younger women of DV and sexual offences (ii) Support needs for LGBT community (iii) Support for perpetrators of DV (iv) Initiatives to support the higher proportions of young boys involved in crime	April 2008	Head of Community Safety
1.2	Develop gender and culturally appropriate responses to anti-social behaviour activities	(i) To monitor and improve further drug and alcohol services available to women (ii) To review existing strategies and develop further initiatives to reduce anti-social behaviour incidents by boys	April 2009	Head of Community Safety
1.3	Enhance services to reduce the number of Female Offenders	To maintain and develop initiatives to reduce the incidence of prostitution in the borough including the Safe Exit programme	April 2009	Head of Community Safety

Theme 2: Access to buildings and services

Ref	Objective	Action	Deadline	Responsibility
2.1	Ensure gender issues are considered in the physical design and development of facilities/services	(i) Develop guidance on how to consider gender issues within service redesign (ii) Design and Access comments required for all planning applications, with design and access statement required for all major planning applications	April 2008 April 2008	Head of Scrutiny and Equalities Head of Development and Building Control

Ref	Objective	Action	Deadline	Responsibility
		(iii) Ensure that communities are engaging in the planning process, as set out in the Statement of Community Involvement	April 2008 and ongoing	Strategic Planning Manager
2.2	Ensure gender issues are considered in the day-to-day delivery of services	To review the Council's programme of Equality Impact Assessments to ensure it covers the high priority services identified from the consultation on the Gender Equality Scheme	April 2008 and annually	Head of Scrutiny and Equalities
2.3	Ensure vulnerable women and men have access to safe and appropriate housing	(i) Develop a programme of action to reduce the numbers of homeless men (ii) Review the available hostel space in borough for women (excluding domestic violence emergency provision)	April 2009	Head of Housing and Housing Advisory

Theme 3: Health Inequalities and Health Promotion

Ref	Objective	Action	Deadline	Responsibility
3.1	Improve the life expectancy of men and women in the borough	As part of our Local Area Agreement we, with our partners, have committed to increase life expectancy in the borough by 10 years and reduce the gap to the national average. This includes action around cardiovascular conditions, coronary heart disease, cancer breast cancer and cervical screening, smoking and diabetes	April 2009	Director of Adult Services
3.2	Improve access to health services	(i) To develop targeted initiatives to raise awareness of men's health issues and encourage greater use of health services by men (ii) To work with health partners to improve the cultural sensitivity of Maternity services	April 2009	Director of Adult Services

Theme 4: Economic Inactivity and Employment

Ref	Objective	Action	Deadline	Responsibility
4.1	Improve economic inactivity rates across the borough (particularly Bangladeshi women and men) in line with LAA mandatory targets	(i) In partnership with Jobcentre Plus, through the LAA process provide detailed analysis of inactivity rates. (ii) Complete Gender Labour Market Profile	April 2008	Access to Employment Manager Information and Equalities Team Leader
4.2	Improve the economic well-being of older men and women	(i) To review and improve benefit advice for older men and women (ii) To work with Age Concern and through the Link Age Plus initiative to tackle older men's isolation	April 2008 April 2008 and ongoing	Head of Accountability and External Funding Service Head Commissioning and Strategy
4.3	Extend flexible working for men and women and access to suitable childcare	(i) Implement a Flexible Working Policy (ii) Review the takeup of nursery places in the borough to identify local issues and barriers	April 2008	Joint Director of Human Resources Service Head Early Years, Children and Learning
4.4	Address any potential gender inequality in pay	(i) As part of the Single Status Agreement, implement a new job evaluation scheme which will be non gender biased (ii) Once Single Status has been agreed, undertake an Equality Impact Audit across the Council	April 2008 and ongoing	Joint Director of Human Resources

Ref	Objective	Action	Deadline	Responsibility
4.5	Open up traditionally male/female occupations	Consider the development of a revised brand for recruitment for both the Council and the PCT. In particular, focus on traditionally female jobs in social care and health and opening these up for men and all sections of the community	April 2008	Joint Director of Human Resources
	Ensuring robust tracking and monitoring to identify employment initiatives in key growth sectors	Regular monitoring of Skillsmatch and Core Plus data	April 2008 and ongoing	Access to Employment Manager

Theme 5: Improve achievement, inclusion and participation of girls, boys, women and men in children's well-being education and personal development

Ref	Objective	Action	Deadline	Responsibility
5.1	Improve educational outcomes and addressing underachievement of boys	To develop further initiatives to narrow the attainment gap between girls and boys		Director of Children's Services
5.2	Improve the participation of men in lifelong learning activities	To develop further initiatives to improve the take-up by men of lifelong learning opportunities including the Idea Store 'Bangladeshi Men's forum'	April 2008	Head of Youth and Community Learning
5.3	Improve the participation of young girls in extra-curricular activities (particularly Bangladeshi girls)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) To offer programmes of activities more appealing to young women in all youth centres (ii) To maintain and extend girl and young women only sessions at Youth centres (iii) To provide training for youth work staff and volunteers in working effectively with young women (iv) To convene a support network for youth work staff and volunteers working with young women 	April 2008 and ongoing	Head of Youth Support Service

Ref	Objective	Action	Deadline	Responsibility
		(v) To deliver a series of youth participation and empowerment activities for young women to celebrate international women's day and shape our future actions		
5.4	Improve the availability of English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes for women	Review existing provision and seek to extend the number of learning opportunities available for women	April 2008	Head of Youth and Community Learning

Theme 6: Participation in Public Life

Ref	Objective	Action	Deadline	Responsibility
6.1	Improve the representation of women in democratic processes and positions of influence	(i) Sustain and extend the Women into Public Life initiative including encouraging women to become councillors, magistrates and lay visitors. (ii) Develop a website to promote Women into Public Life (iii) Review Partnership Boards and structures and activities to encourage greater participation by women	April 2008 and annually April 2008 April 2008	Consultation and Involvement Manager Consultation and Involvement Manager Director of Tower Hamlets Partnership
6.2	Examine potential opportunities for community cohesion activities around gender	To explore the potential for International Women's Week and other festivals to adopt community cohesion as the main theme	April 2008	Head of Scrutiny and Equalities
6.3	Improve the participation of transgender people in public life	To develop a programme of further consultation with the LGBT Community and Staff Forums and other relevant organisation to identify key barriers and issues.	April 2008	Head of Scrutiny and Equalities
6.4	Increase the involvement of men and LGTB parents in their children's education and well-being	Review good practice initiatives aimed at getting greater involvement of men in children's education	April 2008	Head of Equalities and Parental Engagement

Ref	Objective	Action	Deadline	Responsibility
		Encouraging schools to engage with LGBT parents and children	April 2009	Head of Equalities and Parental Engagement

Theme 7: Improving Council's own monitoring arrangements, policies and procedures

Ref	Objective	Action	Deadline	Responsibility
7.1	Review our monitoring arrangements and existing policies for compliance with the Gender Duty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) To revise the Council's monitoring arrangements and guidance to make sure services monitor and consider the interrelationship between gender and the other diversity strands (ii) To implement fully the Equalities Impact Assessment on the Council's procurement (iii) To raise awareness and work with contractors to ensure compliance (iv) To review existing diversity policies and statements to ensure compliance with Gender Duty 	<p>April 2008</p> <p>April 2008</p> <p>April 2008</p> <p>April 2008</p>	<p>Head of Scrutiny and Equalities</p> <p>Head of Scrutiny and Equalities Head of Procurement Joint Director of HR / Head of Scrutiny and Equalities</p>
7.3	Improve consultation and engagement with women, men and transgender people	To consider further improvements to the way that the Council consults and involves women, men and transgender people.	April 2008	Consultation and Involvement Manager / Head of Scrutiny and Equalities
7.4	Provide support to councillors to promote gender equality	Provide support to councillors including information and a training session so they can promote gender equality with their constituents.	April 2008	Head of Scrutiny and Equalities
7.5	Promote the Council's commitment to gender equality and promote positive images of women, men and transgender people	<p>To promote the Gender Equality Scheme with residents, partners and local voluntary and community groups.</p> <p>To review the images the Council uses in its publications to avoid gender stereotyping</p>	April 2008	Head of Communications / Head of Scrutiny and Equalities

9. Reviewing and reporting progress

Effective reviewing and reporting of the Scheme's progress will be achieved through a range of measures to ensure that gender equality is embedded within the Council's strategic and service planning, delivery and review. We have identified a number of actions to achieve this. The following section summarises how we shall achieve this through specific actions to ensure that gender equality is embedded in everything we do.

Regular monitoring and reporting of progress

The Gender Equality Scheme's Action Plan addresses the key concerns emerging from consultation, as well as key actions from the Council's Equality Action Plan. Reviewing the Gender Equality Scheme will be incorporated into the Council's existing Equalities Action Plan monitoring. This is monitored every 6 months with detailed reports to Corporate Management Team and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This process ensures both senior officers and councillors can track progress and take any action necessary to maintain progress. A summary of the Scheme's Action Plan will also be considered by members of the Staff Forums as part of the monitoring arrangements. In addition, the Council is considering an Annual Equalities Stakeholder Conference that will include considering the Scheme's progress and a report of the Scheme's progress will be published on the Council's website annually.

The role of councillors

Although councillors are not explicitly mentioned in the EOC guidance, in their executive and frontline roles, they are crucial to ensuring that the needs of local men and women are addressed within the Duty and in monitoring how the Scheme works. Our scheme recognises the role of councillors in reviewing and reporting the Scheme's progress by:

- Providing support so that councillors can promote the new Duty and scheme with constituents. This may include training and information that can help councillors raise these issues in their surgeries and community forums.
- Strengthening the monitoring role that councillors fulfil through their oversight of Council strategies and plans. Councillors can take a lead on monitoring not only the Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan but also raising any issues around gender in their discussions with services.
- Analysis of Members Enquiries can provide another source of information and data on some of the issues and barriers that local people may face in accessing services.

In addition, we will involve councillors in developing the Scheme by holding a Scrutiny Challenge session with a cross-party group of councillors to test the robustness of the Scheme in its early stages.

Publicising our progress on gender equality

In addition to the Council's six monthly monitoring and reporting and the role that councillors will play, we recognise the importance of making sure that people are properly informed of the objectives of the Gender Equality Scheme and have the opportunity to be involved in providing regular feedback about how the Council is meeting the key priorities. To achieve this, we will:

- Publicise the Gender Equality Scheme at International Women's Week events across Tower Hamlets each year
- Publicise information in Staff Newsletters and in Eastend Life

- Publicise an annual report on the Council's website that will outline the key gender issues, the action we have taken to address any adverse impact of our policies and practices, progress on the action plan and how these have informed changes to the Scheme.

Appendix 1 - Arrangements for evidence gathering

The Council uses a range of methods to gather evidence about the effect its policies and practices have on promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating unlawful discrimination for disabled people within employment, services and education. These include user databases, best value performance indicators, complaints feedback, satisfaction surveys, user groups and application forms. Examples of these are detailed below.

Complaints monitoring

We monitor complaints including harassment by gender. The Council's complaints procedure has three stages. At the first stage, the complaint is dealt directly by the relevant service. If the customer is not satisfied, the complaint is investigated by a manager who aims to respond within 20 days and then if the customer is still not satisfied, it is dealt by the Chief Executive. A summary of complaints is reported to Corporate Management Team and Members and helps to inform how the Council is performing and any areas for improvement.

Annual Residents Satisfaction Survey

A random sample of residents is surveyed each year on a range of issues such as access to leisure facilities, lifelong learning opportunities, recycling and community safety. The results of the Survey are used to help services plan, monitor and review how their services are meeting the needs of users and residents.

Best Value Performance Indicators

There are a wide range of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) the Council uses to measure its performance and to inform improvements to its services. These cover a range of areas including provision of domestic violence services, access to the street environment, satisfaction with benefits services, housing, leisure, parks, libraries, public transport and open space, access to our Council buildings, recruitment and development opportunities by gender. Please see Appendix 2 for details of each BVPI.

Residents Panel

The Residents Panel is a representative sample of residents that reflects the different communities in the Borough. The Panel has approximately 2,400 members and is consulted on a range of issues linked to the Council's priorities and the Community Plan. A variety of techniques are used to gather evidence from the Panel including postal questionnaires, telephone interviews and focus groups. The findings gathered from the consultations are used to inform future service delivery.

Housing

Service take-up and customer satisfaction results are reported to Housing Management, broken down by resident diversity profile information.

Housing Needs Survey was carried out in 2004 to determine the level and types of housing need in the borough. The results of the survey are used to inform future requirements for planning and investment purposes.

Environment and Culture

The leisure centre card and library registration forms helps the Council monitor the level of usage of its leisure centres, Idea stores and libraries by different user groups. Each leisure centre responds directly to any complaints/suggestions to the customer and will make improvements to the service where appropriate. This is reported back to users of the leisure centre through the customer feedback noticeboard. Customer feedback is also monitored through the Monthly Inspection Reports of each leisure centre which assesses the contractor's compliance with the Council's terms and conditions. This includes responding to customer complaints within 20 days.

Appendix 2 - Arrangements for impact assessment

Under the new Gender Equality Duty, we have to undertake assessments each year to measure if the Council's functions have a negative impact on any section of the community or staff in terms of disability, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation and ethnic origin. The purpose of these assessments is to make sure that a policy or procedure is promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating unlawful discrimination for everyone.

An equality impact assessment provides a tool to help the Council improve its services for everyone in the community. It can help staff deliver excellent public services by ensuring that these services reflect the diverse needs of the communities living in Tower Hamlets.

In some cases, the equality impact assessment may relate to a policy, strategy, procedure or function that is due to be reported to Cabinet or another Council body. The Committee report must make reference to the main findings of the equality impact assessment and the proposed action set out in its action plan so that this can inform the decision making.

Because there are a large number of existing policies, strategies, procedures and functions already in place, the Council has also set out a programme to impact assess a number of these such as Corporate Complaints, Consultation and Support for Learning Service. Impact assessments are completed for services and functions on a 3 year rolling programme within each Directorate. As part of the annual review of equalities impact assessments, we will identify any gender equality factors that may affect our programme.

An initial screening must take place for all new policies, strategies, procedures and functions. This must be taken at this earliest stage and helps determine whether an equality impact assessment needs to be carried out. The method for impact assessment is divided into 5 stages:

Strategic Approach

When assessing the impact of a policy or function, a service needs to allocate a team of staff and/or users with different perspectives and expertise, define each person's role and identify who has been trained in equality impact assessments. At this stage, the team must outline the reasons for the impact assessment, the purpose of the policy or function and the different groups that the policy or function is meant to benefit.

Information Gathering

This stage requires the team involved to identify the sources of information they have on different community groups, additional information and consultation they considered and where information is not available, to list the information sources that should be put in place to build a clearer picture of potential for unlawful discrimination or less favourable impact on one or more communities that cannot be justified.

Making a Judgement

This is the most important stage of the equality impact assessment where the team involved uses the information gathered in the earlier stages to consider whether there is potential for the policy, strategy, procedure or function to result in unlawful discrimination or a less favourable impact on any community group by age, gender, disability, ethnicity, sexuality and religion and belief.

Action Planning

An action plan is developed after all information has been considered to demonstrate what action will be taken to address the potential discrimination or less favourable impact a policy or function will have on any group in the community.

Publication and Review

All the Council's equality impact assessments must be published by law and these are made available each year on the Council's website.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Programme 2006 - 2008

EqIAs 2006/07

Directorate	Services or Functions
Chief Executive's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Learning and Development functions and policies • Payroll services and Reward system • Policies supporting diversity in employment • HR Exit strategy • Disciplinary & managing employee performance • New EIA on age legislation • Corporate Complaints • Procurement • CCTV Strategy • Anti-social Behaviour Procedure • Criminal Justice Team • New Cases • Local Management • Third Sector Community Resources - Grants function & funding criteria • Third Sector Compact and codes of practice • Corporate Language Support Service, including sensory access provision
Development and Renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olympic Legacy Plan • Local Development Framework • Development Control – Enforcement • Investment and Business • Conservation area statements • Master Plans (6) (3 expected with 3 going through next year) • Major Development Schemes • Ocean NDC EIA • External funding
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of direct debit for rents • Tenancy support • Homeless assessments -review • Homeless assessments • Allocating temporary accommodation • Award of concessionary award • Decorating scheme • Energy Efficiency • Revised proposal for Tenant participation • Lettings - Choice Based Letting • Housing Customer access proposals

Adult Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation • Carers assessment and services • Interpreting and translation service • Learning and development • Transport
Environment and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gambling Policy • Recycling (Waste Services) • Environmental protection
Children's Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended schools • Children's Centres • Services for disabled children • Lifelong Learning services (6 areas) • Exclusions (2 areas) • Admissions • Support for Learning services (7 areas) • Kinship Care • Private fostering • Review of short breaks

EqlAs 2007/2008

Chief Executive's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Compact and Codes of practice • Domestic violence - Sanctuary Project • Prevent and Deter Programme • Antisocial Behaviour reporting procedure • Policies supporting diversity in employment • HR Exit procedure • Pensions (including ill health retirement policies) • Annual and special leave schemes • Human Resources Strategy • Whistleblowing procedure • Occupational Health Services and staff wellbeing policy • Partnerships • Registration of births, deaths and marriages, citizenship ceremonies • Consultation and involvement policy • LSP-NRS and Community Plan • Information management function • Democratic Renewal and Engagement • Customer Access • ICT • Third Sector Anti poverty function
Development and Renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Control – applications • Master Plan (3 originally scheduled in 0607) • Design and conservation (roll-over from 0607) • Land charges (roll-over from 0607)

Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private Sector Housing Improvement Services • Technical services • Estate Services • Local housing office service • Rents • Home Ownership (roll-over from 0607) • Housing Customer access proposals
Adult Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and performance • Strategic projects • SWIFT • 04/05 Residential care- eligibility criteria • 04/05 Meals on wheels - eligibility criteria • 04/05 Telehelp- eligibility criteria • 04/05 Adult Protection policy and carers support • 04/05 Adult mental health • 04/05 Health partnerships
Environment and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic and transportation • Markets Services
Children's Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in public care • YCL - Youth participation • Primary strategy and Ethnic Minority achievement • Key stage 3 strategy and Ethnic Minority achievement • Teacher recruitment and retention • Information and support services • Youth support and community resources • Equality initiatives • Community language service • Early years - Area Inclusion Co-ordination • Special Educational Needs section • Junior Youth service • Attendance and welfare service • Pupil referral service • 05/06 Children & young people's plan • 05/06 Childcare Strategy • 05/06 Revised admissions protocol • 05/06 Missing Children's protocol • 05/06 Youth offending team • 05/06 Sex & Relationship education policy

Appendix 3: Best Value Performance Indicators: Gender Equality

The following performance indicators are used to gather evidence on the effects of the Council's policies and practices on promoting equality and eliminating gender discrimination.

BVO11a – Percentage of top 5% of earners of Local Authority staff that are women

This indicator measures the number of women that work at the Council who fall into the top 5% of earners. For 2006/07 the Council set a target of 49%. The latest figure shows that 50.3% of the top 5% of earners at the Council are women. It is also helpful to compare this figure to the following key local labour market figures:

- 49 % of working age people in Tower Hamlets are women
- 41% of the local labour market are women
- The upper quartile for all London Boroughs on this indicator is 46.75% (2004/5)
- 68% of all Council employees are female

The target for the next two years is to maintain it at 50%.

BV 225 (introduced in 2005) sets out a basket of 11 actions for local authorities on domestic violence.

This indicator sets out 11 actions that the Council should meet. It includes:

- having a multi-agency strategy and forum
- publishing a directory of local domestic violence services
- the minimum refuge spaces available

The Council has responded yes to all the measures

PSA Targets

The cross-Government Gender Equality Public Service Agreement (PSA) requires the Women and Equality Unit to work with Government Departments to bring about measurable improvements across a range of gender equality indicators, as a contribution to the Government's goals on equalities and social inclusion.

The current PSA (agreed as part of Spending Review 2004) comprises 19 indicators or sub-targets and work to achieve them is being led by 13 teams in 7 different departments. [See the Gender Equality PSA SR04 Delivery Plan.](#)

The original PSA was agreed as part of the Spending Review 2002 (SR02) (final assessment of progress to be made later this year). [See the March 2006 Progress Report on the Gender Equality PSA 2002.](#)

This was a breakthrough in that it represented a strategic approach to gender mainstreaming across a number of Government Departments. Agreement to a further enhanced PSA under SR04 underlined the Government's commitment to this particular approach to gender mainstreaming.

As from April 2007, delivery of the current PSA will be reinforced by the Public Sector Gender Duty.

Satisfaction Surveys

There are a range of satisfaction surveys that the Government requires the Council to undertake every three years. These measure resident satisfaction, disaggregated by gender, with the Council's benefits service, housing services, leisure, parks and open spaces, libraries and museums and theatres/concert halls. This helps inform how well the Council is promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination. A description of each indicator is detailed below,

BVPI 3 General Satisfaction Survey

This survey measures the satisfaction of residents with the overall provision of services including refuse collection, recycling facilities, local transport, complaints handling and leisure and recreational facilities. It also gathers the opinions of residents about the areas of Council activities that they would like to see improvements to. The results of the survey help the Council to build upon the results of our Annual Resident Satisfaction Survey and are used to inform service planning, review and delivery. The results also inform the Council's performance against these indicators:

- BVPI 103 The % of respondents satisfied with local provision of public transport information
- BVPI 104 The % of all respondents satisfied with the local bus service
- BVPI 118c Percentage of library users satisfied with the library overall
- BVPI 119a Percentage satisfied with sports/leisure facilities
- BVPI 119b Percentage satisfied with libraries
- BVPI 119c Percentage satisfied with museums/galleries
- BVPI 119d Percentage satisfied with theatres/concert halls
- BVPI 119e Percentage satisfaction with parks/open spaces

BVPI 80 Benefits Satisfaction Survey

This survey measures the satisfaction of benefit claimants with the Council's Benefits Office and covers Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. The survey measures customer satisfaction with getting in touch with the service, level of customer service when visiting the Benefits Office and the clarity and legibility of the forms, letters and leaflets. The survey results inform service improvements.

BVPI 119 Libraries Survey

This survey measures library service users' reasons for using the library, success in finding various items of information and their satisfaction with different aspects of the service. The results of the survey are used to inform improvements in libraries and Idea Stores.

BVPI 74 Tenants Satisfaction Survey

This survey measures tenant satisfaction with the Council's Housing Services including satisfaction with the condition of their property, the neighbourhood they live in, contact with the Registered Social Landlords, the Repairs Service and opportunities for participation in management and decision making. The survey also asks tenants for service improvement suggestions.