

Equality of Opportunity Committee

EOC(2) 03-07 (p.4)

Date: 8 March 2007

Venue: Senedd

Title: Welsh Assembly Government's draft Gender Equality Scheme.

Purpose

The Welsh Assembly Government has made a commitment to develop and publish a Gender Equality Scheme.

Summary / Recommendations

You are asked to note the Welsh Assembly Government Gender Equality Scheme.

Background

Section 76A of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (inserted by the Equality Act 2006), will place on public authorities a general duty in relation to gender equality when it comes into force in April 2007. This general duty requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

promote equality of opportunity between men and women; and

to eliminate unlawful sex discrimination and harassment

The Strategic Equality and Diversity Unit (SEDU) set up a dedicated project team to develop a Gender Equality Scheme. A project board made up of senior Assembly Government officials and chaired by Helen Thomas (Strategy and Equality Division) has also been established in order to monitor and guide the direction of the Scheme.

A series of engagement events were held throughout Wales in June of 2006. The events were an opportunity for women and men to shape the Assembly Government's first Gender Equality Scheme. A summary report of the key themes that emerged from the events was produced and used by departments to inform the development of their Gender Equality Action Plans. The report was also circulated to everyone who attended the events.

The consultation period commenced on 2 January 2007 and ended on 24 January 2007. This was shorter than our normal practice, but in order to engage as wide a range of views as possible, we held

three focus groups during this time, in Wrexham, Swansea and Merthyr Tydfil, in order to obtain detailed feedback on the draft Scheme and action plans. Comments and views from the focus groups were circulated to departments who were asked to revise their action plans accordingly. The revised Departmental Action Plans which are currently being cleared through Ministers and will be published in a separate document alongside the Gender Equality Scheme.

The following documents are attached for your information:

Gender Equality Scheme – Annex A;

Summary of the consultation and focus group findings – Annex B.

The Gender Equality Scheme will be launched by the Business Minister at the Marriott Hotel, Cardiff on 26 March 2007.

Financial Implications

Costs have arisen from holding engagement events and focus groups. Additional costs will arise from publishing the document and holding a launch event. Sufficient funds have been allocated to cover these costs from the Strategic Equality and Diversity Unit's Promoting Equality Fund for the financial year 2006-2007. Financial implications stemming from Departmental Action Plans will be considered departmental Ministers in approving and taking forward their departmental plans. Financial Planning has noted that while there are no additional financial implications as a result of this paper, any implications for respective MEGS are being addressed separately by each appropriate Minister (BP 1913).

Action for Subject Committee

The Committee is asked to consider the draft scheme and consultation responses and feedback any comments you have to the Strategic Equality and Diversity Unit. Your comments will be added to those already received during the consultation and focus groups and the scheme amended accordingly.

Jane Hutt AM

Minister for Equalities, Children and Assembly Business

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