

Equality of Opportunity Committee

EOC(2)-08-06(p.8)

Date: 25 October 2006

Time: 9.15 – 12.30

Venue: Committee Room 3, Senedd

Title: Disability and Gender Equality Scheme – A Summary Report of the Engagement Events

Purpose

1. Paper to the Equality of Opportunity Committee providing an update on the engagement events held as part of the development of the Welsh Assembly Governments Disability Equality Scheme and Gender Equality Scheme. A summary report of each series of events is also provided.

Action

2. The Committee is invited to note the contents of this paper.

Background

3. The Disability Duty was introduced by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and imposes a 'general duty' on all public authorities to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people when carrying out its functions and will come into force on 4 December 2006. The Gender Equality Duty is the most significant change in sex discrimination legislation for 30 years. It will be introduced on 6 April 2007 and has the potential to transform public policy and public services. Indeed, both duties should lead to more efficient and effective public service and to customer service improvements.

4. The Welsh Assembly Government is subject to specific duties requiring the development of a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) and a Gender Equality Scheme (GES) setting out how it intends to meet the general duty.

5. The Strategic Equality and Diversity Unit (SEDU) has set up a dedicated project team to develop both schemes. The project board is made up of senior Assembly Government officials and is chaired by Helen Thomas (Strategy and Equality Division). In addition, a group of critical friends drawn from national disability and gender equality organisations has been established to help inform the development of each scheme and monitor the implementation of departmental action plans.

Disability Equality Scheme – Engagement

6. A series of engagement events were held throughout Wales in April, May and June of this year, providing disabled people and representatives from disability organisations with the opportunity to shape the Assembly Government's first DES. A summary report was produced detailing many of the key themes and issues raised and used to inform the development of the DES and departmental action plans. A copy of the summary report is attached at Annex A.

Gender Equality Scheme – Engagement

7. Three engagement events were held across Wales in June 2006. The events provided an opportunity for men and women to discuss how Welsh Assembly Government policies impact on their lives. A summary report was produced detailing the key themes and issues arising from each event and was used to inform the development of the GES and departmental action plans. A copy of the summary report is attached at Annex B.

Financial Implications

8. The funding to develop the Assembly Government's DES and GES is being drawn from the Strategic Equality and Diversity Units Promoting Equality BEL for the financial year 2006-2007.

Compliance

9. Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act places a duty on the National Assembly for Wales to promote disability equality and produce a Disability Equality Scheme. This duty will come into effect in December 2006.

Contract Point

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