

Equal Opportunities in the National Assembly for Wales



Equality Training and Awareness Raising Strategy for Assembly Members

**Equal Opportunities in the
National Assembly for Wales
DRAFT
Equality Training and Awareness Raising Strategy**

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Action Plan

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Equal Opportunities in the
National Assembly for Wales

**Equality Training and Awareness Raising Strategy
for Assembly Members**

Foreword

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Equal Opportunities in the National Assembly for Wales

EQUALITY TRAINING AND AWARENESS RAISING STRATEGY **For Assembly Members**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

- 1.1 To assist in raising awareness of equality of opportunity issues throughout the National Assembly for Wales an Equality and Awareness Raising Strategy has been developed which sets out the method by which Assembly Members will have the opportunity and encouragement to participate in and contribute to an effective equal opportunities policy. Policies and strategies are, however, only as effective as those who operate them and have responsibility for them. It is important, therefore, that Assembly Members who have this responsibility be provided with the opportunity to obtain a better understanding and awareness of equality and diversity issues. Hence the need for a specific equality training and awareness raising strategy.

Background

- 1.2 The National Assembly for Wales established a Committee of Equality of Opportunities, an all party Standing Committee. The Committee's priority has been to develop an action programme with activities designed to promote equality of opportunity across all subject areas.
- 1.3 To take forward the equality obligations and intentions of the National Assembly for Wales, the Equality Policy Unit (EPU) was established to provide advice and guidance on equality issues to the Assembly as a whole, and to act as a catalyst for change in taking forward equality issues.
- 1.4 This Equality Training and Awareness Raising Strategy has been developed to help Assembly Members and, as far as possible, has been designed to meet individual needs and preferences in the short, medium and longer term.

The Approach

- 1.5 Careful consideration was given to the approach to be taken in raising equality awareness in order to meet the needs of the Assembly and Assembly Members. First a number of stakeholders were identified, such as Assembly Members. Whilst the objective is the same for each of the stakeholder groups it was considered that a case for a slightly different approach should be made for Assembly Members.
 - 1.6 In general, tailored and appropriate awareness raising will help Assembly Members to identify the potential barriers and issues around equality. Continual awareness raising and gaining experience of stereotyping and prejudice will further help, but only when Assembly Members become aware of, and experienced in, the effect of discrimination.
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The Methodology

- 1.7 In developing this strategy it was also recognised that there was a need to assess the current position regarding equality and diversity policies within the Assembly against best practices elsewhere.
- 1.8 To do this, research was carried out on how other companies developed an equality strategy. In addition the EPU met with representatives of recognised consultancies to discuss the modern methods of equality training and awareness raising available.
- 1.9 The overall methodology findings were that people undoubtedly internalise information and integrate skills effectively by using a variety of techniques.

The Strategy

- 1.10 This strategy has, therefore, been developed for Assembly Members, taking note of the above approach and methodology and follows a modular, tailored programme. A 'menu' of ongoing awareness sessions on a variety of equality and diversity issues using a variety of delivery methods will also be offered.
- 1.11 Assembly Members who are involved with Recruitment and Selection for Public Appointments will be provided sessions that deal with equality issues that identify the barriers to fair and transparent processes, avoiding prejudice, bias and unlawful discrimination. It is proposed that this will be completed by December 2001.

Conclusion

- 1.12 By implementing the recommendations of this Training and Awareness Raising Strategy, the National Assembly for Wales and the people of Wales should look forward to a more inclusive, accessible and achievable lifestyle than ever before.
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EQUALITY TRAINING AND AWARENESS RAISING STRATEGY

For Assembly Members

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The National Assembly for Wales has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity in the discharge of its functions. It also acts as an exemplar in its policies and actions to the rest of the public sector and as an advocate for equality for society at large. It is important, therefore, that it is recognised as an organisation that appreciates, promotes and exemplifies the benefits of a diversified society, culture and workforce. The people of Wales represent many different ethnic origins, cultural traditions and beliefs. As individuals they have different needs depending on their social-economic status, physical and mental ability, age, sexual orientation and geographical locations. It is therefore imperative that those who are responsible for developing and moulding the social, economic and cultural resources of Wales better understand the influence and responsibility they have to serve and meet the individual's need. Assembly Members play a crucial role in this respect.
- 1.2 To assist in raising awareness of equality of opportunity issues throughout the National Assembly for Wales, an Equality Training and Awareness Raising Strategy has been developed which sets out the method by which Assembly Members will have the opportunity and encouragement to participate in, and contribute to, an effective equal opportunities policy. It also takes into account the commitment given to equality in the Assembly Corporate Strategy document Better Wales¹ and the observations and recommendations of the "Lifting Every Voice" Report². However, awareness raising is only part of the Assembly's overall diversity strategy

¹ Better Wales Document available at www.betterwales.com

and cannot, in isolation, achieve the Assembly's commitment and aspiration to equality for all.

- 1.3 Equality is about addressing attitudes and behaviour and ensuring that there are no barriers. Equality must be mainstreamed into the service that is provided if it is to become a reality.
- 1.4 It is too easy to think that people in Wales are able to satisfy their individual needs on an equal or fair basis. The truth is much different. In line with its statutory obligations, the National Assembly of Wales is seeking to develop methods that can continually raise awareness of others' needs.
- 1.5 The Equality Training and Awareness Raising Strategy is not a short term "fix". It is must be regularly monitored and amended to take account of new findings, whether from research or public response. It will take sustained and persistent action over a long period of time. Those who perform functions on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales must always be aware that individual needs change and have the ability to adapt their understanding of how they can take account of and meet those needs.
- 1.6 This initiative began by considering why training and awareness raising was to be delivered. The answer drawn from the many discussions held and background reading was that everyone involved had a need, responsibility and right to know and understand what the law and duties and role of the National Assembly of Wales. It was also important that everyone involved understood the practical benefits that training and awareness raising may provide in undertaking their day to day duties.

1.7 It was then necessary to consider who the deliverers would be and whether they should be internal and/or external. It was concluded that the trainers and facilitators for the workshops and seminars, etc., would be chosen for their knowledge of the specific areas of equality and for their personal commitment to equality and diversity.

2 BACKGROUND

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- 2.1 Working towards this greater understanding of what the National Assembly of Wales needs to do to achieve greater diversity and to mainstream equality in all its functions and business, the National Assembly for Wales established the **Equal Opportunities Committee**, an all party Standing Committee. Its role is to “*ensure that the Assembly has effective arrangements in place to promote the principle of equality of opportunity for all in the exercise of the Assembly’s functions and conduct of business*”.³
- 2.2 The Committee’s priority has been to develop an initial action programme with activities designed to promote equality of opportunity across all subject areas. It also has a strong interest in maintaining dialogue at all levels with groups representing minority and disadvantaged interests. It has particular regard, under Standing Order 14, to avoid discrimination on the grounds of gender, race and disability. It also has regard to other sources of discrimination and social exclusion including age, religious beliefs and sexual orientation.
- 2.3 To support and enhance the plans of the Equal Opportunities Committee and to take forward the equality obligations of the National Assembly for Wales, **the Equality Policy Unit (EPU)** was established to provide advice and guidance to the Assembly, as a whole, on equality issues. The Unit’s main remit is to act as a catalyst for and a promoter of change and to provide a centre of expertise and advice on best practice and maintain dialogue with organisations representing minority and disadvantaged groups.

³ Standing Orders: Sections 48 and 120

2.4 To identify ways of delivering training and awareness raising the staff in the EPU have met with many training providers and equality consultants to research current methods and best practice to be adopted by the Assembly. This Equality Training and Awareness Raising Strategy considers and recommends how the National Assembly for Wales can achieve its short, medium and long term aim in arriving at a position where it can deliver its service and perform in a truly diversified environment.

3 THE CURRENT POSITION

3.1 Equal Opportunities Training

3.1.1 Assembly Members have a particularly influential role in promoting and encouraging equality of opportunity. This derives from their democratic representational role, the duties and powers of the National Assembly and the leadership role which the Assembly has in the life of Wales. Many of them have had a personal or professional involvement in promoting equality of Opportunity. But, as Roger McKenzie has suggested in “Lifting Every Voice”, the influence of Members is generally unlikely to be fully effective in promoting equal opportunities without a sound awareness and understanding of equality issues. It is proposed that this be facilitated by making training available.

4 THE NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING

- 4.1 The aim of this strategy is that all Assembly Members should share an understanding of what constitutes discrimination and harassment and are able to reappraise their attitudes. The most innocent or unthinking remark can cause offence or distress. This can lead to poor working relationships and may never be remedied if not addressed.
- 4.2 Lack of knowledge is no excuse for creating or tolerating discrimination and is not accepted as a defence in law. Everyone has a responsibility to act fairly and lawfully and to remove barriers and potential barriers in the working environment and in service delivery. Awareness raising would help Assembly Members to appreciate the barriers faced by people from different backgrounds or from different environments. Continual awareness raising of disadvantage will further help. But only when all involved have become experienced in the effect of unfair, unjust and unlawful discrimination will they understand the detriments experienced by some people.
- 4.3 This reaction has been demonstrated by Jane Elliott, an American campaigner and educator against discrimination, who has conducted such training exercises for over thirty years. She has produced video evidence such as *"The Eye of the Storm"* and *"A Class Divided"* in which children and adults experience what it feels like to be unfairly disadvantaged or insulted. The effect is powerful and, although her strategy is not without its critics, has proved to help people challenge their mind set on the issue.

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- 4.4 Only people with hearing difficulties can understand the isolation and frustration experienced when colleagues cover their mouths when talking or who look away. Only people with mobility difficulties can understand the dilemmas faced with swing doors and steps. Only people who are ridiculed because they do not fit the “norm” can understand the indignation of being considered different. These experiences are not one off - they are faced on a daily basis by many people. They may be unintended, but they are hurtful and unnecessary.
- 4.5 Appreciating that everyone has differences and that these differences should be considered and respected will take the Assembly forward. Helping Assembly Members to appreciate difference and diversity through awareness raising and training will enable them to perform to their full potential and, as a consequence, enable the organisation to benefit. Importantly, it should be understood that equality is everybody’s responsibility.

5. EQUALITY TRAINING AND AWARENESS RAISING AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

5.1 Aims

5.1.1 The aim of equality training and awareness raising within the Assembly will be to provide information and advice on the implications of the relevant legislation and best practice. It is suggested that if training or awareness raising is to be effective, it must be delivered in a way which best suits each individual. It therefore needs to be understood what method of delivery best serves Assembly Members' needs.

5.2 Before drawing up the Equality Training and Awareness Raising Strategy it was recognised that there was a need to identify the current position regarding:

- Assembly Members' awareness of their rights and responsibilities;
- current best practice in other organisations in achieving a level playing field for all;
- the most efficient and effective method of raising awareness of equality issues for Assembly Members; and
- preferred methods of delivering training and awareness raising

5.3 Training Objectives

5.3.1 Each level of training and awareness raising will set its own objectives. However, the general objectives of all training and awareness raising on equality and diversity will be:

- to present a "forum" whereby participants can explore and understand the commitment of the National Assembly for Wales to achieve diversity within the organisation;
- to provide the opportunity for Assembly Members to understand their responsibility, not to discriminate, unjustly or unlawfully, in the performance

of their work and to explore their own prejudices and bias and how to not allow this to affect their judgement;

- to increase awareness of the effect of discriminatory behaviour on the organisation and individuals and how policy development and service delivery may unfairly or unlawfully disadvantage groups of individuals if their needs are not fairly considered.

5.3.2 As a minimum, all Assembly Members will need to understand their legal responsibilities. However, more specialist equality awareness needs should not be neglected. Therefore, Assembly Members will be invited to identify what are their training needs and preferences and a number of varying methods of awareness raising will be identified and delivered, on request, from this on an ongoing basis.

5.3.3 Awareness raising will be available for all Assembly Members and will be periodically assessed, in consultation with them, to ensure it meets their needs. To achieve this a modular menu driven approach is advocated.

6 DEVELOPING THE TRAINING AND AWARENESS STRATEGY

- 6.1 Discussions were held with several members of the Committee of Equality of Opportunities and other Assembly Members to identify needs. To identify best practice and compare with other organisations, research was carried out by reading (in publications such as People Management, Equal Opportunities Review and web sites) how other companies have developed an equality strategy and this was followed up by discussing their experiences with the companies direct.
- 6.2 To identify the most efficient and effective method in awareness raising of equality issues the EPU met representatives of Cameron Woods Associates, Taylor Stewart Associates, Pearn Kandola and Ashley Maynard Associates, to discuss modern methods of equality training and awareness raising. When arrangements to meet were made, each organisation was told that the purpose of the exercise was to inform the researcher of:
- what was the best method of achieving raised awareness;
 - what areas of equality should be targeted in the Assembly's awareness raising strategy; and
 - what were the realistic timetables for achieving basic awareness.
- 6.3 All interviewees were assured that no information would be given or asked for that would compromise any possible future tender process. The EPU is grateful for the commitment given by those interviewed in their openness, time and expertise. All were enthusiastic about the Assembly's plans and the information gathered was invaluable in the design of the Equality Training and Awareness Raising Strategy.
- 6.4 Examples given of the aims and objectives of training and awareness raising and the various methods of delivery used by other organisations were most useful.

Although the approach differed, what was consistent was the commitment to achieve diversity, to deliver fair administration and to encourage the development of talent regardless of individualism.

- 6.5 Learning is a complex process requiring not just the receiving of information but the assimilation, integration and practice of new skills and attitudes. Whilst equality issues are serious and sensitive, the training and awareness raising will aim to be entertaining and will be delivered to Assembly Members as understandable working information, patterns and habits.

7 THE WAY FORWARD

7.1 Training Structure

7.1.1 The Equality Training and Awareness Raising Strategy will need to be monitored and adjusted where and when necessary. New legal issues, such as the EU Employment Directive, and identified best practices will be introduced to Assembly Members as they are identified so that they can be as informed as soon as is possible. Again, this will be offered as formal training or specialised modules so that Assembly Members can gain access to information conveniently and in a manner that best meets their and the Assembly's needs.

7.1.2 The strategy follows a modular, tailored and continuing programme which will be offered in a range of time frames provided by, in the main, recognised external consultants.

7.1.3 Amongst the many modules that will be offered they will also include:

- appreciating diversity
- equality in the selection process;
- identifying barriers to equality;
- business case for diversity;
- effective management practices;
- disability issues

7.1.4 The above schematic is only intended as an indication of the modular approach to be adopted. For example, "disability issues" can be broken down into such issues as:- deaf awareness, signing, mobility issues, dyslexia, sight impairments, mental illness, special equipment, accessible information, the work of the statutory agencies, "reasonable access", independent living etc..

7.1.5 These are all terms that themselves need understanding to ensure that barriers are removed from the work carried out in the Assembly or are not unintentionally created. Taking this modular approach across other issues, such as race and gender, increases the number of different modules eventually needed to be offered (including the varying styles and mechanism of delivery).

7.1.6 The different styles and mechanisms are also important as part of this strategy, and it is intended to make use of a variety of them, such as information technology, workshops, etc.. In particular, with regard to the use of IT, it is intended to utilise a tailored computer package to assist in the delivery of the equality awareness as part of the basic awareness module and as a stand alone 'information giving, testing and certification' module.

7.1.7 **EPU have developed a web-site** that can be accessed by all with the Assembly. It is designed on the basis of promoting the advice available from within the EPU and with links to statutory bodies and other organisations. There will also be links to publications. The web-site aims to inform and educate staff and Assembly Members on up to date information, best practice and further development of legislation. The long term aim is to create a web-site that can be made **available to the people of Wales via the Internet** as a resource tool and to demonstrate the commitment to diversity in the Assembly.

7.2 Commitment from the Top

7.2.1 In her Foreword, **Edwina Hart, Chair of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity** gave her commitment to achieving an organisation free of discrimination or harassment and to ensuring that everyone works towards the

removal of unfair, unjust and unlawful barriers. Whilst all Assembly Members need to demonstrate commitment to achieving equal opportunities and diversity, it is clear that the Assembly will only be successful if Assembly Members visibly demonstrate their commitment on a day to day basis.

7.2.2 Assembly Members will decide for themselves whether or not to undertake the basic awareness raising sessions or ongoing modules. However it has already been identified that there is an urgent need for **Assembly Members who are involved with Recruitment and Selection for Public Appointments** to understand how unfair, unjust and unlawful discrimination can occur in the process from advertising to appointment. **As part of this strategy, the proposal, as a starting point for Assembly Members, is to recruit a recognised consultant to design and deliver awareness raising seminars.** The seminars will identify unlawful practices, barriers to fair, just recruitment procedures, personal prejudices and bias and the benefits to be gained from achieving diversity in Public Appointments by selecting talent from as wide a pool of candidates as possible.

8 TIMESCALE

8.1 Basic Awareness raising

- 8.1.1 This will be dependent on availability of speakers and diary dates, and will be ongoing. Depending on this and on take up it could be completed **by end of December 2001.**

8.2 Recruitment and Selection Training and Awareness raising for Assembly Members involved with Public Appointments

- 8.2.1 Discussions have already been held with five equality specialists/consultants and this could be arranged **by end of December 2001.**

8.3 Ongoing Specialist Modules

- 8.3.1 A programme of specialist modules will be provided from December and will be ongoing and delivered on demand.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The aim of the Equality Training and Awareness Raising Strategy is to provide a method by which all Assembly Members will have the opportunity to better understand what is expected of them under legal requirements best practice. Those who participate will be equipped to understand their individual rights and responsibilities and be informed of the Assembly's procedure to deal with any act of discrimination.
- 9.2 The Strategy has focussed on individual responsibility in order to provide the skills to eradicate discrimination in the delivery of the Assembly's functions. The Training and Awareness Raising programme to be delivered is only one method which will assist in the process of achieving and sustaining an appreciation of diversity.
- 9.3 It is recognised that this Strategy will not meet the needs of the National Assembly for Wales on a permanent basis and will need to be monitored and revised as it progresses. Neither training nor awareness raising alone will achieve a culture which appreciates the richness of diversity and values talent. Equality will only be achieved if commitment is made by all.
- 9.4 By implementing the recommendations of this Training and Awareness Raising Strategy, the National Assembly for Wales and the people of Wales should look forward to a more inclusive, accessible and achievable lifestyle than ever before.

EQUALITY TRAINING AND AWARENESS RAISING STRATEGY

ACTION PLAN - Assembly Members

	2001						2002					
<u>Action</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Jun</u>	<u>Jul</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Sept</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>
EPU to to identify presenters/facilitators to present Recruitment and Selection Equality Awareness Session for AM's involved with Public Appointment												
EPU to develop Recruitment and Selection Equality Awareness Sessions for AM's involved with Public Appointments												
A.M.'s to attend presentation on Recruitment and Selection Equality Awareness Sessions.												
EPU to identify from AM's basic equality awareness raising requirements (equality Needs Analysis questionnaire) ¹												
EPU to identify potential presenters/facilitators in response to Equality Needs Analysis requirements												
EPU to offer awareness raising options ² to AM's												
AMs to attend basic awareness raising sessions												
Awareness raising sessions to be available to AM's ³												
EPU to evaluate modules, workshops												
EPU to provide feedback on evaluation												
EPU to discuss evaluation with consultant												

¹ Needs analysis will identify development needs such as Disability Awareness, Cultural Awareness, Legislation etc.

² Awareness raising offered will be voluntary, bespoke modular, presented as workshops, seminars etc. at a variety of times and dates to suit individual needs

³ Awareness raising as requested

