

Meeting Report



Falkirk Council

*Corporate & Commercial
Services*

Meeting: Equal Opportunities Working Group
Date: 27th February 2007
Venue: Committee Rooms, Municipal Buildings, Falkirk

Present: Jess Kennedy, Corporate & Commercial
Pauline McGrellis, Corporate & Commercial
Irene McIntrye, Community
Eileen Reynolds, Development
Andy Christie, Education
Brian Douglas, Law & Administration
Pam Gillespie, Housing & Social Work
Carolann Morland, Finance
Aileen Patrick, Corporate & Commercial

Distribution Equal
Opportunities
Working Group
Members (list
attached)

For Info. :-

Chief Executive
Stuart Ritchie
Karen Algie

Apologies: Louise Barry, Housing & Social Work
Shona Blackie, Community
Antonia Sobieraj, Corporate & Commercial

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

Jess confirmed who apologies had been received from. She welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Brian Douglas from Law & Admin and welcomed back Aileen Patrick to the group.

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING – 20th June 2006.

Minutes of last meeting were agreed.

Jess confirmed that all the actions from herself and Pauline had been completed. Jess confirmed that Pam had an action to send some information to Tonia regarding work being undertaken within Children Services which provided an overview of their work and the links to the Community Plan. Pam confirmed this had been done.

3. EQUALITY UPDATE

Equality Scheme

Jess confirmed that Shamime was collating the updates for the first year Race Equality Scheme action plans and would be pulling together a report for Services. Jess confirmed that this report would include a copy of Service's recent training monitoring statistics.

Pauline gave the group an outline of a briefing session that was being developed with regard to the Equality Scheme. Pauline said that the purpose of this was to provide Services with an overview of the background to the Scheme, the various duties and the purpose of impact assessment and action plans. Jess confirmed that the Policy Team would support Services where possible in delivering the briefing sessions, however, the resources of the team were tight and therefore she suggested that the Policy Team could provide an overview to managers for them to rollout. Pauline said that notes would be provided to support the slides and the proposal was that this would be sent to Managers to use at team meetings so they could raise their staff's awareness. Pauline said that she would send a copy of the draft briefing session to the group and asked if they could read over this and get back to her with comments.

ACTION: PAULINE

Jess said that the Policy Team were planning on developing a range of briefing sessions that could be used by Services in terms of raising employee awareness in different aspects of equality. Aileen said she felt that would be beneficial. Jess asked the group if they could think of any topics that would be relevant to their Service to let the Policy Team know. Jess said that they would work with Services to help develop the briefing sessions.

ACTION: ALL

Data Matching/Monitoring

Jess said that another data matching exercise would have to take place during 2007 as the Council was required to monitor disability. Jess handed out a copy of the ethnicity monitoring form and confirmed this had been amended to reflect questions in relation to disability and gender.

Jess said that the Commission for Race Equality (CRE) were saying it was not acceptable to have refusals, however, she acknowledged that it was difficult to get people to return the form. Pam said more work was definitely needed to get the message across and this should be reflected in the text on the front page. Andy said that a stronger enforcement message was needed.

Carolann said the difficulty faced with monitoring disability was that a person's disability status could change over time. Jess acknowledged this and said another difficulty was also dealing with an individual's perception of whether or not they were disabled.

Jess confirmed that the data matching forms would be sent to home addresses in the first instance and Services would only get involved at a later stage if further follow up was required. Irene said that the format of the form would need to be changed as people would ignore it if they had completed the information previously.

Internet – Equality Link

Jess said that an Equality link had been added onto the Falkirk Council internet page and outlined the various documents that were included (such as the Equality Scheme, completed Impact Assessments, Monitoring statistics, Policies and Procedures).

Impact Assessments

Jess said that Services needed to ensure that Impact Assessments were being carried out and that completed copies were posted on the internet site. Jess said that the Gender duty would be enforcing Impact Assessments and these would need to be done retrospectively, unlike the Race

and Disability duties which requested assessments be completed only when new or revised policies were developed.

Carolann asked where the Impact Assessment Toolkit could be found. Jess confirmed that details of this had been sent to Services but a copy was also available on the HR Intranet page. Jess confirmed that the Council's current I.A Toolkit covered all equality strands. Jess said that the Policy Team would be reviewing this during 2007 to try and make it more streamlined/simpler for Services to use.

ACTION: ALL

4. DOMESTIC ABUSE UPDATE

Jess said that a training programme had been issued to Services but the uptake had been very low. Jess confirmed that the training was free to Services and covered a range of areas from general awareness-raising to specific topics such as substance misuse. Jess asked the group to feedback to their Services and encourage anyone who might benefit from the various courses to book their places.

ACTION: ALL

5. E-LEARNING TOOLKIT

Pauline confirmed that the E-Learning toolkit had been developed and officially launched. Pauline said that information in relation to this would be included in the next training Bulletin (July) and that a memo would also be sent to Services to confirm it was up and running and asking them to encourage employees to sign up for access.

Andy said that he had raised this with Education SMT. Jess reminded the group that the LRC or Training Suite within the Municipal Buildings could be used if groups of staff wished to do the training at the same time.

Carolann asked if the training was being linked to the Corporate Induction. Pauline confirmed that they had worked closely with Marilyn Henderson from Employee Development and she would be linking this to the learning zone and the E-Induction.

Pauline confirmed that she would provide quarterly reports to Services in relation to the uptake from staff and pass/fail information.

6. NEW/UPDATED POLICIES

Pauline advised the group of 3 new policies which had been updated and would be posted on the Intranet shortly (Homeworking, Family Leave Guidelines and Flexible Working Hours).

Andy asked if the Homeworking Policy made reference to ICT systems as he felt there was a gap between the provisions being offered and the ability to support systems from an ICT basis. Pauline confirmed that ICT were involved in the development of the policy but this was mainly in regard to the process for providing and maintaining equipment. Pauline confirmed to Andy that ICT had been running a separate homeworking pilot scheme and that if he required any further information on this he could contact Lorraine Drummond within ICT who ran the pilot scheme.

Jess said that with effect from 1st April 2007, carers of adults had the right to apply to work flexibly. Jess said that applications would follow the same format as employees with children under 6 years of age. Jess said the development of a more detailed carer's policy would be done later in 2007. Pauline confirmed that a memo and updated guidance would be issued to Services shortly.

7. REPORTS

Training statistics

Jess gave the group a copy of their Service's training monitoring statistics and confirmed this would be sent as part of the response to the Commission for Race Equality as well as being posted on the internet. Some discussion took place regarding the ongoing monitoring of training that would meet the requirements of the public sector duties.

Concern was raised regarding employees having to continually complete monitoring forms at each training session and this being detrimental to the process.

Jess confirmed that information regarding employee's attendance at corporate training was sent to Services on a quarterly basis and this should be included in the statistics they provide and would not be monitored separately. Jess circulated a copy of the template provided by Finance that she liked and felt this would be useful for Services to use. Jess said she would send a soft copy to the group and asked that they feedback their comments in relation to this. **ACTION: JESS/ALL**

Jess said that Resourcelink, once fully developed, should be able to provide the statistics required and resolve the problems and concerns being raised but in the meantime Services needed to use a consistent reporting structure. Eileen asked that a category for training refusals was added on to Resourcelink as well.

In addition to training statistics, Jess said that all employment monitoring statistics had to be published on an annual basis. Jess said that the Policy Team were looking at a new template that could be used to record all information, including Performance Indicator statistics. Jess said she would circulate to the group for comment. **ACTION: JESS/ALL**

RIMF/Employment monitoring statistics

Jess issued the group with a copy of the RIMF statistics (from July 2006) and the employment monitoring stats for their information.

Andy asked if it would be possible to change the RIMF Form to include post codes that would provide GIS information. Jess said that the Central Scotland Race Equality Council did the overall monitoring for Forth Valley and did not have a link to the GIS system. Jess said, however, that the Police were looking to set up a web based system that would only need one input from each organisation and reports would be generated from this.

Jess advised that RAHMAS were also discussing the possibility of extending the scope of the group to cover all areas of equality. Jess said that these discussions were in early stages and she was unsure as to how it would develop as RAHMAS was specifically set up to deal with racist monitoring.

8. AOCB

International Women's Day

Jess advised that IWD was taking place on Saturday 17th March and the theme of this year's event was "Equality for All." Jess said that there was a different format this year with World Café style workshops taking place in the afternoon.

Harassment Support Officer recruitment

Jess advised that the Council was very short of Harassment Support Officer resources. Jess confirmed that there had recently been a recruitment drive but there had been very little response. Jess asked the group to take this back and raise at any relevant meetings. If anyone is interested in

being a harassment support officer they can contact Shamime Mansoori (on tel. 01324 506012 or email shamime.mansoori@falkirk.gov.uk).

ACTION: ALL

Jess confirmed that the remit of the HSO would be to support an employee and talk them through the process and the options available to them. Jess confirmed that HSO would not be involved in actual Dignity at Work hearings. Jess also said that full training would be given to anyone interested in becoming an HSO.

Format of future meetings

Jess asked the group for their comments in relation to the future format of meetings. Jess said that she felt it would be appropriate for the agenda of each meeting to focus on certain topics and certain times of the year.

The group felt this would be a good approach and Eileen said this would give the opportunity for key contacts within the Service to attend certain meetings to discuss areas they were responsible for. Jess agreed this would be a useful approach but confirmed she would want the core group to still attend for continuity purposes.

Jess advised that the CMT were looking at the setup of the EOWG but no agreement had been reached on this as yet. Irene said that if the CMT were looking at making the EOWG a strategy group then it needed to be driven at a higher level with various groups filtering into it.

Jess asked the group for their thoughts and comments on the future structure of the meetings and to send these to her.

ACTION: ALL

Other

Andy Christie confirmed that he would be leaving the Council on 22nd March. Jess said that she wished to thank Andy for his involvement, support and contribution to the EOWG over the past few years and wished him all the best for the future.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday 12th June at 2.30pm**, Committee Rooms, Municipal Buildings, Falkirk. [Please note this date differs from that agreed at the meeting.](#)