

ANGUS COUNCIL
SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

INTRODUCTION

This, the council's first Single Equality Scheme, sets out our commitment to promoting equality and marks a new phase in our approach to equalities.

Current race, disability and gender discrimination legislation place public authorities such as Angus Council under what are described as 'general duties' to tackle unlawful discrimination and harassment and to promote equality and good relations amongst diverse groups in the community and within our workforce.

In addition, the legislation places specific duties upon public authorities – including a duty to produce and publish equality schemes which explain how the general duties will be met.

Until now, the council has fulfilled these duties by having three separate schemes – race, disability and gender. In addition there has been a more general equal opportunities policy.

This single equality scheme replaces these four documents.

This changes our traditional approach of seeing equalities as a number of separate strands. The single scheme brings together the council's plans for identifying equalities issues, not only in relation to race, disability and gender but across all protected equalities characteristics, including, age, sexual orientation, religion and belief, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, and pregnancy and maternity.

The scheme has been based on a demographic analysis of Angus, which can be found at www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/files2/stats/council-area-data-sheets/angus-factsheet.pdf.

There is also a Duty on local authorities to prepare equality schemes in respect of race, disability and gender for schools. As with this Scheme, our Education Department has incorporated this Duty within a single scheme for schools. This is available by contacting our ACCESSLine on 08452 777 778.

The document uses links to other council information which assumes access to technology. Should this not be possible, please contact the council's ACCESSLine as detailed below.

We aim to integrate equality throughout the organisation and the services that we provide. The scheme includes an action plan which lists what we will do, and the timescales involved. Through our commitment to the ethos of partnership working, we will also involve our stakeholders. We will monitor and report on progress against the action plan on an annual basis.

The content of this publication can be made available on alternative formats or translated into other community languages. Please contact the Council's ACCESSLine on 08452 777 778 for further information, or email accessline@angus.gov.uk.

1. **Legislative Background**
2. **Our Commitment to Equality**
3. **Equality Impact Assessments**
4. **Partnership Working**
5. **Service Delivery**
6. **Access to Council Information**
7. **Communication and Consultation**
8. **Employment and Training**
9. **Leadership and Responsibilities**
10. **Action Plan**
11. **Reporting on Progress**
12. **Review of the Scheme**
13. **Feedback, Comments and Complaints**

Appendix Action Plan

1 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

The Equality Act 2010

In April 2010, a major piece of legislation, the Equality Act, was passed with the aim of consolidating and harmonising existing equalities legislation and strengthening the law to support progress on equality. The timetable for implementing the various parts of the Act is subject to change, from October 2010-2013 and our Single Equality Scheme will be amended to reflect further legislative changes as required.

The Act sets out the full range of the nine 'protected characteristics', which are protected from discrimination on the basis of:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion and belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Not all protected characteristics are treated in the same way and employers, for example can still positively discriminate in favour of people with disabilities.

Positive action is more comprehensive under the Act, and there are exemptions for specific groups, for example, single sex services, blood services, insurance etc.

The Act prohibits:

- direct discrimination
- indirect discrimination
- discrimination by perception
- discrimination by association
- discrimination arising from a disability
- harassment and
- victimisation

There is an extension of third party harassment to all the protected characteristics apart from pregnancy and maternity, and marriage/civil partnerships. The Act also extends indirect discrimination to gender reassignment and disability.

Dual discrimination will be introduced, which will allow a combination of a maximum combination of two of the protected characteristics, but is currently on hold.

The Act introduces a Single Equality Duty, which applies only in the public sector (it is anticipated with effect from 2011). This duty will place a pro-active requirement on public bodies to have regard, in carrying out their functions, to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic, and persons who do not share it.
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic, and persons who do not share it.

Existing Duties

The Act replaces previous equality legislation such as the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, the amended Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 and the Equality Act 2006 which are now repealed.

However the specific duties which these acts placed on public bodies, including Angus Council remain in place until at least 2011/12:

The **general duty** differs slightly for each equalities strand, requiring all public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

Race

- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups

Disability

- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- eliminate harassment of disabled people in relation to their disabilities
- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and others
- take steps to take account of people's disabilities, even if that involves treating them more favourably than others.
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life

Gender

- eliminate unlawful sex discrimination
- eliminate unlawful harassment
- promote equality of opportunity between men and women

The general gender duties to eliminate unlawful sex discrimination and harassment includes discrimination and harassment on the basis of gender reassignment.

'Due regard' means giving appropriate weight to promote equality in proportion to its relevance.

The **specific duties** are the steps we need to take to ensure we are meeting the general duty.

This includes a requirement to have equality schemes in respect of race, disability and gender.

Other specific duties which fall on public authorities in relation to the race, gender and disability equality strands are requirements to:

- State which of our functions and policies have been assessed as relevant to the general duty and set out arrangements for:
 - monitoring functions and policies for any adverse impact on equality
 - assessing and consulting on the likely impact of proposed policies
 - publishing the results of assessments, involvement, consultation and monitoring
 - implementing the scheme through action plans
 - reviewing the effectiveness of the scheme
 - reporting on progress

- ensuring public access to information and services
- training employees on issues relevant to the general duty of promoting equality
- Set out arrangements for monitoring by reference to the equality group to which they belong
 - employees in post
 - applicants for job
 - applicants for training and promotion
- Set out arrangements for monitoring and analysing by equality group
 - grievances
 - disciplinary action
 - training
 - employee leaving the authority

As stated in the Introduction, until now we have met our duties by having three separate schemes. This Single Equality Scheme now replaces these schemes and in doing so extends coverage to the protected characteristics of age, sexual orientation, religion and belief, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity, in recognition of legislative developments in these areas.

Human Rights

Every decision the council makes which has implications for the public needs to consider the question of whether we are allowed to do what we want to do under the Human Rights Act. All our employees need to be alert as to any human rights implications of decisions that are taken, and ensure that people's human rights are not breached.

Any new policy that we introduce must be compatible with the European Convention of Human Rights.

2 OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY

Angus Council supports equal opportunities in the provision of our services to the community and in relation to employment. We oppose all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of race, disability, gender, religion/belief, age, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership status, gender re-assignment, and pregnancy and maternity.

We believe that we should adopt and promote policies which are in the best interests of the Angus community and which aim to:

- provide accessible services
- promote accessibility of information
- make the best possible use of our workforce and attract, develop and retain good quality employees.
- develop and maintain communication and consultative links
- continuously monitor the level of progress against our single equality scheme.

To further these general commitments, we have adopted nine specific equality commitments in relation to the protected characteristics:

- 1 We will carry out equality impact assessments on our strategies, policies and services to make sure that there is no unlawful discrimination in the way that they are designed, developed or delivered, and that wherever possible equality is promoted.
- 2 We will provide quality, accessible services to the community and oppose any unlawful discrimination in relation to the delivery of these services.
- 3 We will ensure that all members of the community have equal access to information regarding council services.
- 4 We will develop and maintain effective methods of communication, consultation and involvement with members of the community.
- 5 We will ensure that our employment practices do not unlawfully discriminate and that we build skills and raise awareness of equality issues within our workforce.
- 6 We will ensure that at both elected member and officer level there is clear accountability for promoting and delivering our commitment to equality.
- 7 We will set specific actions that will help to achieve equality across Angus.
- 8 We will report on our achievements against the action plan on an annual basis.
- 9 We will review the single equality scheme every three years.

These commitments inform the format of the rest of the Single Equality Scheme.

In fulfilling these commitments we recognise that we are building on much good work undertaken in support of our previous Equal Opportunities Policy and Race, Disability and Gender Equality Schemes.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

We are committed to carrying out equality impact assessments on our strategies, policies and services to make sure that there is no unlawful discrimination in the way that they are designed, developed or delivered and that wherever possible equality is promoted

In meeting the terms of this commitment, we have ensured that

- equality impact assessments have been carried out on existing strategies, policies and services, and all relevant new and proposed strategies, policies and services are required to undergo an equality impact assessment before they are presented to committee.
- we also undertake equality impact assessments on potential budget savings identified during our annual budget setting process.

The current combined equality impact assessment tool can be accessed via our council website (www.angus.gov.uk), our internet pages, or by contacting our corporate Equalities Officer.

Completed equality impact assessments for committee reports are electronically accessible via the council's website. All completed equality impact assessments for strategies, policies and services are also published on the website.

The council's Chief Officers are responsible for the completion of equality impact assessments for their own departments.

Most equality impact assessments are presently only undertaken on the grounds of race, disability and gender but will be extended to the other equality strands by 2012.

3 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The council in its role as community leader recognises the importance of working with partners in reviewing overall equalities strategy and direction, and ensuring that strategy can be implemented in cost effective ways to the benefit of all Angus citizens.

Within this spirit of partnership working, the council will ensure that, jointly with our partner agencies, Duties to promote equality are met.

Together with our community planning partners we have agreed a [Single Outcome Agreement](#) with the Scottish Government, and our council's corporate priorities are reflected in that Agreement. These priorities are supported by action plans, and through these we are collectively addressing all the issues that impact on the communities of Angus.

Over the years since equality Duties were introduced, we have seen significant equality developments in working with our community planning partners and other local authorities.

4 SERVICE DELIVERY

We are committed to the provision of quality services to the community and oppose any unlawful discrimination in relation to the delivery of these services on the grounds of race, disability, gender, religion/belief, age, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership status, gender re-assignment, and pregnancy and maternity.

In meeting the terms of this commitment we will endeavour to ensure that:

- an equality perspective is mainstreamed into the work of the council, and integrated across council departments
- where appropriate, all members of the community have access to services to meet need
- employees are provided with an awareness and an appreciation of the importance of ensuring that all users of council services receive quality service provision.
- where appropriate, services collect, monitor and maintain data of service users in order to ensure anti-discriminatory practice
- we comply with statutory obligations placed on us by anti discriminatory legislation.
- our own Procurement arrangements and the Tayside Procurement Strategy 2008-11 refer to our policy commitment to support equality and diversity duties in procurement activity. Contractor's compliance will be checked by asking equalities questions, and by including contract conditions on equalities, for both services provided under contract or agreement, and contractors' equal opportunities policies and practices.

5 ACCESS TO COUNCIL INFORMATION

We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community have equal access to information regarding council services regardless of race, disability, gender, religion/belief, age, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership status, gender re-assignment, and pregnancy and maternity.

In meeting the terms of this commitment we will endeavour to ensure that:

- all members of the community are able to access information on council services via local ACCESS offices or ACCESSLine or our council website (www.angus.gov.uk).
- facilities to interpret council information are made available wherever a need is identified ie translation into other languages, audio tapes, sign support, hearing loops, and facilities for blind and visually impaired people.
- employees are provided with an awareness and an appreciation of the importance of ensuring that the whole community has access to council information.
- we distribute our council magazine, Angus Life, to every Angus household twice a year.

6 COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

We are committed to ensuring that we develop and maintain effective methods of communication, consultation and involvement with all members of the community regardless of race, disability, gender, religion/belief, age, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership status., gender re-assignment, and pregnancy or maternity.

In meeting the terms of this commitment we will endeavour to ensure that:

- our managers are aware of the requirement to consult with and involve service users in respect of significant, and relevant, developments in their services.
- representation from the whole spectrum of the community to develop and maintain communications and consultative links with the council is encouraged.
- our methods of communication are regularly reviewed to ensure that they continue to promote equality of participation by the whole community.
- community interest groups are encouraged to attend various council meetings where relevant.
- service level agreements are established with equalities groups and the voluntary sector where appropriate.
- funding criteria for voluntary bodies and community organisations stipulate that they must have an equal opportunities policy.
- specialist and interpretation facilities are provided at council meetings and departmental meetings where a need is identified to assist participation by all employees and members of the community.
- all relevant community groups are included in consultation exercises on issues affecting the community.
- communication and consultative links are established between the council and the community and be advertised within the community.
- employees are provided with an awareness and an appreciation of the importance of establishing effective communications and consultative links with members of the community and our customers.
- there are various means by which citizens and communities can make their views and opinions known to us.
- our consultation process is designed to engage and encourage participation from diverse and excluded communities.

7 EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

We are committed to ensuring that our employment practices do not unlawfully discriminate on the grounds of race, disability, gender, religion/belief, age, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment, and pregnancy and maternity, and that we build skills and raise awareness of equality issues within our workforce.

This commitment is encompassed within our People Strategy, and in meeting the terms of this commitment, we will ensure that all managers have access to corporate personnel information within the Personnel Advisory Bulletins and Recruitment Manual. As a result, we will endeavour to ensure that:

Recruitment and Retention

- the criteria for employment is based on merit, and all job applicants are considered on that basis.
- positive steps are taken to find suitable alternative employment elsewhere within the council for employees who become disabled in the course of their employment with the council.
- all disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria for a job vacancy are interviewed.
- dates of birth play no part in employment decisions, subject to compliance with current statute.

Training and Development

- training on how to recognise discrimination and harassment in the workplace is made available to employees.
- all employees have equal access to training and development opportunities offered by the council.

Conditions of Employment

- where practicable, employees with disabilities are provided with the necessary support and equipment to enable them to carry out their duties and responsibilities efficiently in a safe working environment.
- employees have the opportunity to raise issues in relation to their working arrangements, training and development needs and other conditions of their employment.
- our terms and conditions of employment are sensitive to, and do not indirectly unlawfully discriminate against any employee.
- we adopt practices which assist employees in balancing work and personal responsibilities.
- the procedures adopted to grade jobs within the council do not discriminate on the grounds of gender.

Monitoring our Workforce

Figures describing the current make up of our workforce are available on our council website (www.angus.gov.uk).

We use the results of this monitoring to ensure

- our equality commitments have been met.
- we are prima facie not unlawfully discriminating against particular equality strands – if it appears that we are, we will investigate and if necessary, take remedial action.

We monitor the ethnicity of our employees in line with the current EHRC recommended classifications. We have extended this monitoring to include disability and gender. Please refer to page 5 of this Scheme for details of our monitoring arrangements.

We do not collect data regarding age, religion/belief or sexual orientation, but are committed to doing so by 2012.

8 LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Our Strategic Policy Committee has overall responsibility for the Single Equality Scheme. Responsibility for implementation of the scheme largely rests with our Chief Officers Management Team which will oversee the scheme and the delivery of the actions set out within the equality action plan.

A Corporate Equalities Group, which includes a senior lead from each department on equality, together with the Corporate Equalities Officer, provides regular advice and support for Chief Officers.

This group will report its activities and progress on the equality action plan directly to the Chief Officers Management Team which in turn, through the Chief Executive, will report to the Strategic Policy Committee.

9 ACTION PLAN

The action plan outlined in the attached Appendix outlines the specific actions which have been identified for the period to 2013 to support achievement of our commitment to equality.

10 REPORTING ON PROGRESS

An annual report on progress against the action plan will be submitted to our Strategic Policy Committee and placed on our council's web site (www.angus.gov.uk).

11 REVIEW OF THE SCHEME

We will formally review the scheme every three years.

12 FEEDBACK

If you wish to offer feedback on the Scheme, or wish to make a comment or complaint regarding an equality issue, please email equalities@angus.gov.uk or telephone the Equalities Officer on 01307 476058.

SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME ACTION PLAN 2010-2013

Action	Lead Department	By when	What we expect to achieve
In light of the Equality Act 2010: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review relevant policies Raise awareness/provide training Implement any new duties Update the single equality scheme as necessary. 	Chief Executive's	As legislation is phased in from 2010 to 2013	Compliance with new legislation. Increased levels of awareness and understanding of equalities' obligations.
Develop equalities section on council website/intranet.	Chief Executive's	March 2011	Provision of a better service to people from under-represented groups, due to a greater appreciation of their cultures etc. A reference section of information.
Introduce some good news stories re migrant workers in Angus Life and Angus Matters.	Chief Executive's with corporate Equalities Group	April 2011	Increase understanding of migrant workers to assist good race relations.
Review the migrant workers strategy in Angus in conjunction with partners.	Chief Executive's	May 2011	A more inclusive community recognising the economic benefits of Eastern European workers.
Train Harassment Contacts in new legislative requirements under third party harassment.	Chief Executive's	May 2011	Extending Contacts' knowledge to provide appropriate support.
Develop a Violence Against Women Policy for employees.	Chief Executive's	June 2011	Support and assistance for employees experiencing domestic violence etc.
Publish the outcomes from Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs).	Chief Executive's	June 2011	EIAs for policies and functions and agreed budget savings appear in equalities section of website.
Review job outlines to ensure unnecessary criteria are removed.	Chief Executive's	September 2011	More applications from under-represented groups. Compliance with indirect discrimination legislation.
Make training in communication skills available to front line staff.	All	November 2011	People with certain disabilities have better access to services.
Update managers' recruitment training, and conduct a thorough review of the Recruitment Manual.	Chief Executive's	December 2011	Managers fully understand their obligations under equality legislation.

Action	Lead Department	By when	What we expect to achieve
Review Emergency Planning procedures in respect of out-of-hours language provision.	Chief Executive's	December 2011	A recognised procedure in place in respect of an emergency situation where no English is spoken.
Distribute equalities monitoring questionnaire to all employees.	Chief Executive's	December 2011	Collation of data which is consistent with the information obtained from the jobs portal for new employees.
Review violence against women agenda.	Social Work & Health/ Chief Executive's	December 2011	Meet our gender equality duties.
Involve people of various ethnicities, disabilities etc in decision making via community groups, fora, associations etc	Chief Executive's	December 2011	Views and actions formed which represent the ethnic minority communities, and people with disabilities. Align equality objectives with these views wherever possible.
Investigate the introduction of SMS texting.	Chief Executive's	December 2011	Improved service to members of the public if texting introduced, including those with hearing impairments, learning disabilities, young people, older people etc, who wish to contact the council.
Develop a transgender policy.	Chief Executive's	June 2012	Greater level of awareness of transgender issues. Guidance if an employee becomes transgender.
Undertake more research to develop proposals to encourage more males into caring roles.	Social Work & Health	2012	More mixed genders in a wider range of posts by creating a non-stereotypical workforce.
Undertake a needs assessment as part of the development of care group strategies to ensure that a range of support services exist that meet the needs of men, women and transgender people.	Social Work & Health	2012	Identify and meet the needs of people living in Angus.
Progress LGBT issues through work with the Angus LGBT Development Group, and the employee LGBT group.	Chief Executive's	2012	Greater awareness and understanding of LGBT issues. Meet legal requirements.
Attempt to assess the level of harassment and barriers experienced by men, women, transgender and people with disabilities.	Social Work & Health/ Chief Executive's	2012	Identify problems and seek to address them.
Agree solution with TACTRAN Regional Transport Partnership, Transport Scotland and Network Rail to provide disabled access for passengers at Montrose railway station.	Infrastructure Services	2012	Improved accessibility to train services by mobility impaired people and wheelchair user passengers Improved access and security.
Increase the number of bus boarders at bus stops, and	Infrastructure Services	2012	Increase in easier access onto buses for people with mobility

Action	Lead Department	By when	What we expect to achieve
<p>increase in bus stops with raised kerbs.</p> <p>Increase the number of low floor, wheelchair accessible vehicles on council contracts.</p>			<p>impairments.</p>
<p>Amend Dog Warden's booklet to include reference to dog fouling and the difficulties created for people with disabilities.</p> <p>Dog Warden to Visit high school premises.</p>	Infrastructure Services	2012	<p>Raised awareness of the problems.</p> <p>Less dog fouling in public thoroughfares.</p>
<p>Liaise with established Gypsy Traveller contact in Angus to improve relationship with GTs.</p>	Chief Executive's/ Neighbourhood Services	2012	<p>Raised awareness of GT issues experienced.</p> <p>Our legislative requirements under race equality are met.</p>
<p>Review/amend current Procurement Guidance to reflect equality legislation and ensure successful contractors are aware of the importance of compliance.</p>	Corporate Services	2012	<p>Contractors/supervisors aware of equalities legislation.</p> <p>Proactive promotion of equality within organisations providing services to and on behalf of the council.</p>
<p>Address any gaps in equalities monitoring data of service users.</p>	All	2012	<p>More comprehensive evidence-based data for the improvement of service delivery.</p>
<p>Evaluate equalities training programmes</p>	Chief Executive's	2012	<p>An assessment of the effectiveness of the training and the impact it has had.</p>
<p>Continue a programme of minor and major accessibility adaptation projects, as well as the latest best practice, in each new build or refurbishment project.</p>	Corporate Services	2013	<p>Continuous improvements in a rolling programme to improve physical access to council buildings to ensure equality of physical public access to council services wherever possible.</p>
<p>Utilise current accessibility data for council buildings to allow consultative meetings to be held in accessible venues.</p>	Corporate Services	2013	<p>To ensure accessibility and egress of venues for people with various types of disabilities.</p>

