

EQUALITY POLICY

6 September 2010

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to ask the Board to approve the new Equality Policy which applies at all levels including corporate, office, service and individual.

2 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Lothian Valuation Joint Board in its continuing commitment to the promotion of equality and to meet our obligations under the law has produced a new all encompassing Equalities Policy.

3 MAIN REPORT

- 3.1 The new policy replaces the existing policies on Gender Equality, Age Discrimination, Equal Opportunities, Disability Equality and Race Equality and applies across the spectrum on discrimination, equality of opportunity and the promotion of good relations in respect of age, disability, ethnicity, race, colour, gender, religion and sexual orientation.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 5.1 There are no adverse environmental impacts arising from this report.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

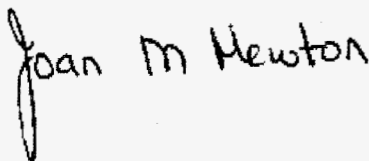
- 6.1 Lothian Valuation Joint Board is recommended to:

- a) note the contents of this report;
- b) approve the New Equalities Policy which replaces all existing equalities policies

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Appendix

1. Draft Equality Policy

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan M Hewton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Joan M Hewton
ASSESSOR

26 August 2010

DRAFT



EQUALITY POLICY

EQUALITY POLICY

(covering all employees)

1 INTRODUCTION

Lothian Valuation Joint Board is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, good relationships with stakeholders and tackling all forms of discrimination which may arise. This comprehensive Equality Policy forms the basis of our commitment to help us meet our obligations under the law. This policy is effective from September 2010 and will be reviewed in September 2012 then on a 3-yearly basis thereafter. Amendments may be required out with this period to reflect any changes in legislation or issues that may arise.

2 SCOPE

This policy replaces existing policies on Gender Equality, Age Discrimination, Equal Opportunities, Disability Equality, and Race Equality and applies across the spectrum on discrimination, equality of opportunity, and the promotion of good relations in respect of age, disability, ethnicity, race, colour, gender, religion and sexual orientation. The policy applies at all levels including corporate, office, service and individual.

3 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The Equality policy is supported by a number of over-riding aims and objectives that the Board shall endeavour to achieve. These are indicated below:-

- Ensure that the allocation of financial resources within the organisation shall as appropriate take into account equality considerations.
- Ensure that equality considerations are integrated into all relevant areas of service planning, management and delivery.
- Improve the Joint Board's awareness and understanding of the needs of different groups through liaison, involvement, and dissemination of information.
- Ensure that Joint Board services are accessible and delivered appropriately and sensitively in order to facilitate equality of treatment.
- Ensure that information about services is readily available, easily accessible and offered in appropriate formats and languages.
- Ensure staff are aware of the policy, understand its requirements and are able to apply it within their own area of work.

4 KEY AREAS

While issues of equality cover all aspects of the work of the Board there are a number of key areas where equality has particular significance. These are outlined below in conjunction with an indication of the actions and requirements that are necessary.

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EMPLOYMENT

- Promote opportunities so that the Joint Board's workforce is diverse and representative of the local community.
- Ensure job vacancies are accessible to people from all sections of the community.
- Ensure that persons are not discriminated against because they have a responsibility for dependant children or adults.
- Ensure that applicants are not discriminated against on the basis that they have been unemployed for a long term.
- Where practicable, ensure job adverts focus on the job needs so as to attract a broad spectrum of applicants.
- All successful applicants will be subject to a pre-employment medical examination.
- Tackle harassment or bullying in the workplace.
- Ensure consultation with staff representatives.
- Monitor recruitment, promotion, grievances, disciplinary procedures and exit from employment.
- Provide training and development opportunities for all staff.
- Encourage all staff who meet relative job criteria to apply for senior grades.
- Ensure incremental pay progression and that pay scales are applied to all staff.
- Ensure dignity at work and ensure any abuse is dealt with under the Joint Board's Disciplinary Procedure.
- Ensure that any new voluntary redundancy schemes are based on objective criteria and redundancy pay based on the statutory scheme as allowed under the regulations.
- Extension of contracts beyond 65 years old will be at request of employee and will be considered by the Assessor.
- Ensure absence management process will be applied to all staff.
- Make provision for and support where possible career breaks.
- Provide a mechanism for applications from all staff to change work/life balance i.e. full time to part time hours.
- Ensure the performance appraisal scheme shall include all staff.

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RESOURCES

The Assessor shall ensure that in terms of budgetary, resource monies shall be available to meet the requirements of this policy and to promote the issues surrounding equality in all its forms. Time shall also be taken to ensure that all staff within the Board are aware of this policy and understand the need to consider and address equality issues during their daily work.

CUSTOMER CONSULTATION and ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The Joint Board has developed an online customer care questionnaire and all stakeholders who use our service are encouraged to provide feedback through this mechanism.

Access to information in a variety of formats and through various media is vitally important. Our website is used extensively by our stakeholders particularly at certain key times. A review shall be undertaken to ensure the information is presented in an easy to understand manner and that where possible different formats and aids are available.

In addition we are pro-active by making direct contact with different organisations in order for information to be provided either at meetings or by advertisement in appropriate newsletters and similar.

RESPONSIBILITIES

For any policy to be successful it is essential that responsibilities are identified and allocated.

Noted below are the main responsibilities that are required to support the successful operation of this Policy:-

- The Joint Board's elected members will have overall responsibility for the policy and ensuring adequate resources are provided to ensure that the policy is adhered to.
- The Joint Board's Management Group have the responsibility for overseeing the implementation and monitoring of the policy.
- Managers within the Joint Board are responsible for ensuring that all aspects of their work comply with the policy.
- All staff are required to ensure fairness towards colleagues, service users and other members of the community in carrying out their duties.
- All staff should help promote the Policy in the workplace in all aspects of service delivery and to work towards the elimination of discrimination.
- All staff have a duty to report instances of discrimination to their manager at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate action can be taken to remedy the situation.

5 MONITORING & REVIEW OF THE POLICY

An annual monitoring report will be prepared which will include all relevant statistical data collected in the previous year. This report will be circulated to the Joint Board's Management Group which will provide an opportunity for consideration, suggested improvements and amendments to the policy. The monitoring report will also be circulated to the Joint Board's Elected Members.

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The annual monitoring and collection of statistical data will comprise of the following:-

- Employee age
- Training by gender
- Salaries by gender/race/disability
- Working Patterns/Flexible Working by gender
- Job applications by ethnic origin/disability/gender
- Successful applications by gender and disability
- Leavers by race/disability/gender
- Employment by gender/disability

Reviews will take into account the views of elected members, staff, community and voluntary groups and trade union representatives and we will continue to engage with people from the diverse communities in Lothian to help shape the services we deliver.

6 DISSEMINATION OF THE POLICY

The policy and annual monitoring report will be published on the Joint Board's website. These documents will be available in a range of formats and languages upon request.

The policy will also be available for staff perusal/reference on the Joint Board's Intranet.

Applicants for Joint Board posts will be made aware of the policy and it will form part of the induction programme for new recruits.

7 COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS

Any comments, suggestions or improvements to this policy should be passed to the Human Resources Manager who can be contacted by telephone on **0131 344 2514** or by email to **personnel@lothian-vjb.gov.uk** or in writing, addressed to the Human Resources Manager, Lothian Valuation Joint Board, 17A South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9FL.

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8 ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	DESIRED OUTCOME	TIMESCALE
To ensure the Equalities Policy is a constantly evolving document	Monitor and investigate any suggested improvements to the policy	A policy that truly meets today's needs and meets legislative requirements	Ongoing
Raise the profile of equality issues across the Joint Board	Prepare annual review for elected member approval and then publish on website	Heightened awareness of the Joint Board's commitment to equalities	Annually and Ongoing
Raise public awareness	The up-to-date policy and annual report available on the website	To heighten awareness and encourage input from stakeholders	Ongoing
Availability of information relating to equalities available in various formats	Statement to be included in website and other documents, if possible	Encourage stakeholders to contact the Joint Board	Ongoing
Collection of statistical data for employment monitoring purposes	Collect and collate the data	Report findings annually to Lothian Valuation Joint Board	Annually
Raise awareness of equalities within the Joint Board	Ensure that equalities is an item on all internal meetings agendas	Staff are aware and alert to equalities issues and have a vehicle to raise concerns and suggestions	Ongoing
Customer Care Feedback	Scrutinise all customer care returns	Take on-board any positive suggestions to improve the service	Ongoing
Ensure electoral registration is available to all	Visit minority groups in Edinburgh and Lothian's and provide guidance and information	Ensure stakeholders are informed about the services provided	Ongoing

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**THIS DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE IN LARGE PRINT, BRAILLE, VARIOUS COMMUNITY
LANGUAGES AND CDROM**

Please contact our office, details are noted below:-

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