



Gender Equality Scheme Annual Report April 2007 – March 2008

Introduction

Warwickshire Police Authority is made up of County Councillors, Magistrates and Independent Members, who reflect the diverse community of Warwickshire. Their key responsibility is to secure the maintenance of an efficient and effective Police Force in Warwickshire. This involves monitoring and scrutinising the Force to ensure that they are meeting their duties.

Warwickshire Police Authority is committed to promoting equality and diversity in all of its business. Our vision is that everyone regardless of their Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Religion & Belief and Sexual Orientation perceives their experiences with the Authority to be fair and equitable. This includes all who work for, are affected by or receive services from the Authority.

Background

The Equality Act 2006 amended the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 so that there is now a duty on all public authorities, including Warwickshire Police Authority, to:

- Eliminate unlawful sex discrimination and harassment.
- Promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

In addition to these the Authority has a specific duty to prepare and publish a Gender Equality Scheme. The scheme states what we intend to do between 2007 and 2010, to make sure that in the operation of the Authority's functions we meet our legal requirements under the Equality Act 2006. The scheme can be found at Appendix A.

Our scheme contains statements on the following areas:

- How we will consult on gender issues to form our priorities.
- How we will promote gender equality.
- How we intend to assess the impact of our policies, procedures and practices on gender issues.
- How we are going to gather and use information, in particular when reviewing the effectiveness of our Action Plan and preparing subsequent schemes.
- How we will monitor Warwickshire Police Force's own Gender Equality Scheme to ensure they meet their duties under the Act
- How the Authority will monitor its own progress against planned activity.

The Authority has a duty to produce an Annual Review of the Gender Equality Scheme, to show the progress that has been made over the year and how the scheme will be taken forward over the coming year.

How we Deliver Gender Equality Objectives

Warwickshire Police Authority has a Lead Member responsible for Diversity and Equality, who chairs the Authority Diversity Panel and reports to the Full Police Authority.

Police Authority Diversity Panel meetings have taken place five times between April 2007 and March 2008. The Gender Equality Scheme is considered at these meetings alongside relevant gender information and issues, including Police Force recruitment, retention and progression.

A progress report from the Diversity Panel is presented to the Full Police Authority three times per year.

The Police Authority is represented at the Warwickshire Police Force Confidence and Equality Board, where diversity issues affecting the Force are considered.

The Police Authority hold Warwickshire Police Force to account and ensure the Force undertakes all of its general and specific duties under the Act. The Force provides a general report on progress and achievements to the Diversity Panel, which allows the work of the Force to be scrutinised.

The Association of Police Authorities provides guidance, advice and support on meeting the diversity duties, including gender. The Policy Officer at the Authority attends the Equality and Diversity Officers' Network to share best practice and to learn more about the diversity duties. This information is disseminated to the Authority through the various reporting methods.

What is Taking Place?

The Gender Equality Scheme is published on the Police Authority website and is available to Members. The Gender Equality Scheme Annual Report will also be made available.

The Authority will be advertising for Independent Members in April 2008. Consideration has been given to diversity in the development of the recruitment process. Once Members have been appointed, Equal Opportunities Forms completed by applicants will be considered. If there are any under represented groups, these will be identified and the Member recruitment process will be reviewed accordingly.

A Gender Awareness session for Members will take place as part of a wider training session on diversity issues. The session will happen once new Independent Members have been recruited to the Authority.

Independent Custody Visitors will be provided with equality and diversity training during the next year.

Warwickshire Police Authority will be developing a Combined Equality Scheme over the coming months. A combined scheme would incorporate the requirements of Disability, Gender and Race equality legislation, with those of Age, Religion & Belief

and Sexual Orientation to produce a comprehensive document including all six strands of diversity identified by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

By bringing all of the schemes into one document, the equalities objectives and actions of the Authority will all be captured in one place, making the process less confusing and reducing duplication.

The Action Plan in the Gender Equality Scheme will contribute to the Action Plan in the Combined Equality Scheme. There will be some actions specific to the different strands, including gender, alongside generic actions for all six strands of diversity.

Equality impact assessment initial screening will be incorporated into the new Combined Equality Scheme. A review of all Authority functions and policies will take place, followed by an initial assessment considering the six strands of diversity. A team will be established to do this, with full Equality Impact Assessments taking place for policies and functions identified as having a high or medium impact on equality.

Over the next year progress will be made on ensuring that gender remains mainstreamed in the business of the Police Authority, alongside the other five strands of diversity.

Conclusion

The Authority acknowledges that whilst progress has been made to improve gender equality, further improvements can be made to ensure that service provision is equitable to all members of the community.

As detailed in the Authority's Gender Equality Scheme, it is considered necessary that the Action Plan is regularly reviewed and developed, to ensure it remains focused and fit for purpose. As part of this Annual Report work has been undertaken to update the Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan as detailed in Appendix B. This will assist in focusing the Authority's equality improvement activity in 2008 - 2009.

Appendices

Appendix A – Gender Equality Scheme 2007 – 2010

Appendix B - Action Plan for 2008-09