

By: Director of Personnel & Development
To: Personnel Committee - 21 May 2007
Subject: Gender Equality in Kent County Council
Classification: Unrestricted

SUMMARY: This report briefs Members on the activity to support gender equality in Kent County Council

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This briefing paper responds to a cabinet request for information on activity to support gender equality in KCC. The Authority's overall position on this issue is contained in our published Equality Scheme. KCC's Equality & Diversity policy statement sets the context and commitments within which KCC staff operate and outlines action to challenge inappropriate behaviour and promote a KCC culture that values and respects difference.
- 1.2 KCC has a high percentage of women in our workforce. 79.5% (36,400) of our 45,810 staff (including schools) are women and 9,410 (20.5%) are men. In our top 5% of earners as measured in BVPI 11a, 53.48% are men and 46.52% are women. Work is continuing to improve the ration of women in this top 5% category.

2. STAFFING NUMBERS

- 2.1 Historically some occupations were primarily held by men e.g. engineering and others e.g. the caring professions by women. KCC's gender breakdown therefore does vary between directorates. As an illustration of this, the latest staff figures break down as follows:

Environment & Regeneration

Women 48.85%

Men 51.15%

Kent Adult Social Services

Women 82.59%

Men 17.41%

Children, Families & Education

women 81.56%

Men 18.44%

3. EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE

- 3.1 A range of measures are in place and planned to meet both statutory obligations and KCC'S commitment to promote gender equality through

eliminating discriminatory practice and developing an organisational culture that values and respects both men & women equally. These include:

Equal Pay – KCC is one of a relatively small number of authorities to have completed a review of pay across gender. Phase I of the Equal Pay review showed no significant detriment for women within the organisation.

Monitoring – There is robust performance monitoring with the Equality Lead Officer Group (ELOG) reviewing data on a quarterly basis and addressing identified concerns. Directorate Equality & Diversity Groups then take any action necessary. Monitoring includes:

- Recruitment - applications/offers of interview/ those selected for job
- Training applications through most service units
- Grievance/disciplinary and harassment procedures
- Staff exit surveys, to see if particular issues arise relating to gender
- Recruitment panels that have at least one member trained in diversity

Training – We run specific training events to ensure staff understand issues around diversity. The Diversity in Action one day introduction to diversity covers stereotyping and gender discrimination. There are separate events for managers and staff. The 2 day Recruitment & Selection event and the half-day - Positive Action Training covers gender issues in the recruitment & selection processes.

Dealing with discrimination – Where discriminatory practice is identified our disciplinary procedures are followed. If staff feel they have been discriminated against they can make use of the Grievance or Harassment Procedure. Advice and support is available to staff through Personnel, the diversity staff groups, Trade Unions and the Support Line staff counselling service.

4. GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME

4.1 The KCC Equality Strategy contains our new Gender Equality Scheme (published April 07). Activity outlined in the action plan includes:

- On-going work on Equal Pay Reviews, with guidance for managers to promote a consistent approach to starting salaries between men and women
- minimising occupational segregation by promoting the accessibility of job roles to both men and women, for example “Take Your Young People to Work events, to encourage young people to consider non traditional job roles
- Reviewing KCC web-site to reflect non-stereotypical images - e.g. male carers, women engineers
- BVPI target 11a activity to increase women in the top 5% of earners, utilising our Talent Management Framework to assist the development of women into top 5% and learning from the Exemplar Employer Scheme, on ways of getting more women into senior positions through more part-time working practice

- Schools working to minimise occupational segregation for boys and girls, libraries encouraging more men into the service and Kent Highways Services encouraging women to apply for roles which may also include working with schools and colleges to promote highways careers to women.
- Kent Highways Services Alliance Board in recognition of the needs and benefits of employing a more diverse workforce, in what has been a traditionally male dominated work area, are developing an action plan to support achievement of Equality & Diversity objectives & commitments. For example policies around flexible working and jobsharing, which have a significant impact on those with caring responsibilities (predominantly women).

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The Personnel Committee is asked to note and support the policies, procedures and activity in place to promote Gender Equality in KCC

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