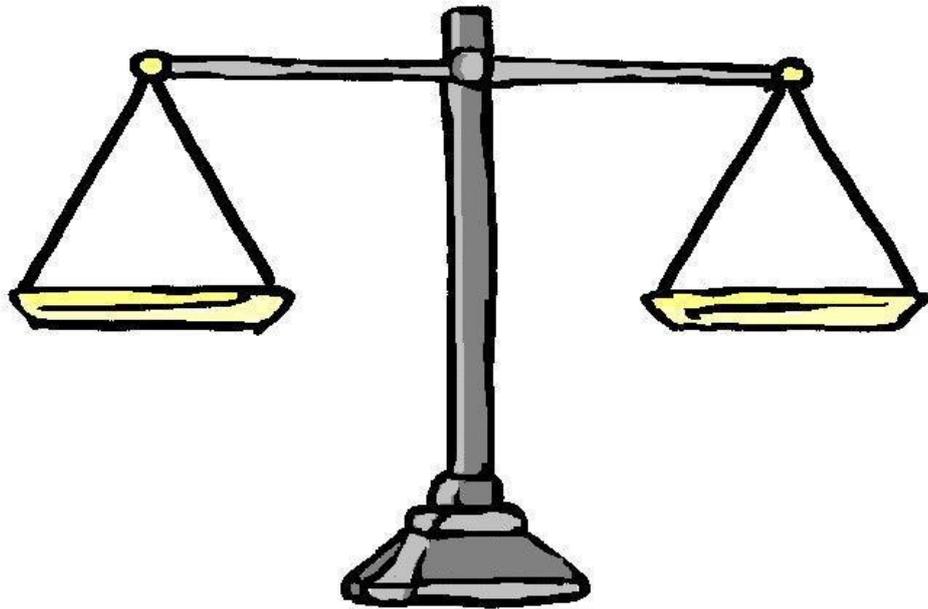
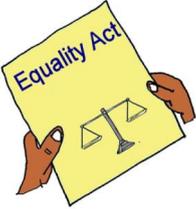
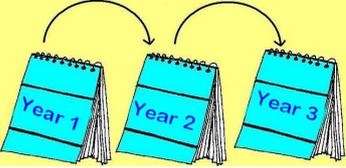


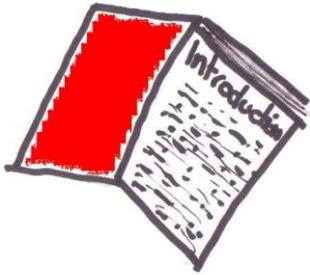
EQUALITY PLAN



Easy
Read

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Introduction

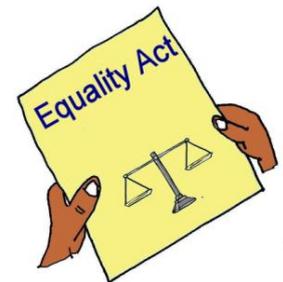
The Equality Act 2010 says that I must set out my aims for equality. This plan is the first of its kind by us, but equality has been an important part of our work since the start. So this plan carries on from that.

A promise to treating people fairly is central to what we do. I will make sure that there are equal opportunities for my staff as well as people who use our services. No-one will be discriminated against, picked on or bullied.

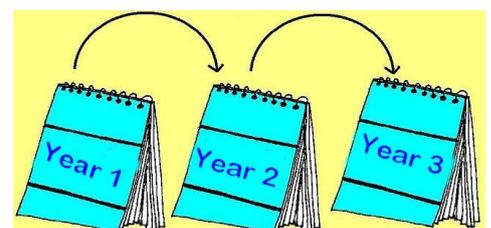


I expect my staff to be against discrimination and share my promise to work in a way that is fair to all.

We talked to several organisations about our ideas. They represented the 9 groups protected by the Equality Act 2010. We also asked for thoughts through our website and used information from other places.



The aims we have set apply to all 9 protected groups and will be looked at every year. In 3 years, they will be made to fit in with our 3 year planning timetable.



The key information on equality will be in our yearly report. Other information will be put on our website.



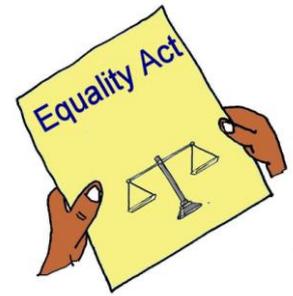
During our work we take into account equality and human rights issues. Staff have had training for this, on the Equality Act and others. More detailed training on the protected groups is planned for the future.



Peter Tyndall
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
March 2012

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 brings together several different laws to do with equality. It protects people in the following groups:



Age



Disability



Gender reassignment
(changing from one gender into another)

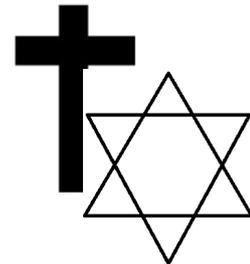


Marriage and same sex partnerships



Pregnancy and being a mother

Race



Religion and belief

Sex (gender)

Sexual orientation

(whether someone is attracted to someone of their own sex, the opposite sex or both sexes)



By law, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales must do what the Equality Act says. There are 2 types of duties we must do, general and specific.

General

The general duty means that an organisation must think about equality and fairness in their day to day work. Policies must be made with equality issues in mind and the same for services. This will make things better for everyone.



Specific duty

These are extra duties that certain key organisations must follow. They include making Equality Plans, gathering information and studying it, reporting it and being accessible.



What the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales does



We do two things. The first is to look into complaints made by people against public organisations. The second is to look into complaints against local councillors.

We think about whether someone has been treated unfairly or have received bad service. The organisations we can look into include:

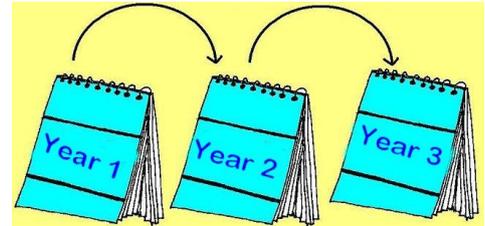
- local government (councils)
- the National Health Service (including GPs and dentists)
- housing associations
- the Welsh Government



Complaints against local councils are slightly different to ones against public bodies. Under the law, a third party will be involved. They will look at our findings and they will decide on the complaint and any penalty.



The 3 year plan 2012 - 2015

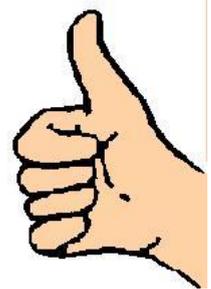


We are quite a small office with about 50 staff. All 3 million people who live in Wales can use our services (plus others who receive services in Wales). This means that our work has to meet the needs of all the different people.

This Equality Plan should fit in with our 3 year company Action Plan. Below are the Vision, Values, Purposes and Aims from that plan and the Equality Plan follows on from these.

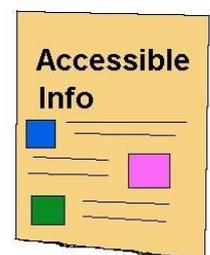
Our Vision

To put things right for service users and to push for improvements to those services. We do this by learning from the complaints we look at.



Our Values

Accessibility - we will be open to everyone and work to make sure no-one is excluded. We will be thoughtful, polite and respectful. We will do our best to communicate with people in the way that they prefer.



Fairness - we will remain independent and carefully use all the evidence available to make a decision.



Learning - we will learn from our experiences and encourage other organisations to do the same.



Effectiveness - we will make sure that we work in ways that make the best use of the public money we receive.

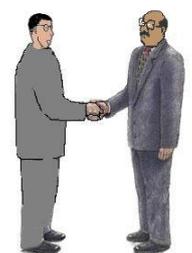


Being a good employer - we are determined to provide a good workplace and to support our staff to make sure that we remain professional and trustworthy.



Our Purposes

- To look into complaints against public bodies.
- To put things right. We will try to put people back in the position they would have been in before they were wronged. We will work to get the best possible result.
- To share good ways of working, so that public bodies can learn to do things better.
- To help people get their complaint to the right place.
- To look at complaints made against local councils.



- To do things to a high standard which will help people feel confident in local government.

Aims

1. To offer a service with excellent customer care. Increase awareness of our service and do our best to make it accessible and easy to use.



2. To handle complaints to a high level of quality, dealing with them thoroughly and fairly and communicating clearly.

3. To use the experience gained from our investigations to improve public services and policy.

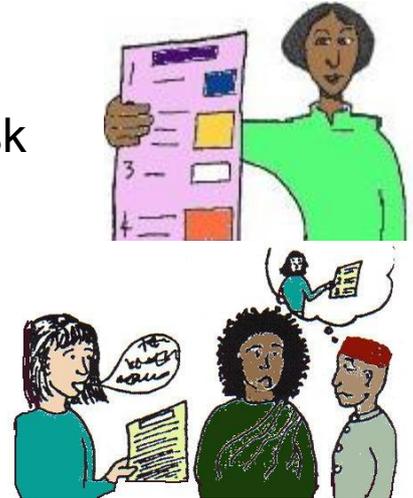


4. To look at and improve the way we work and make the best use of the public money given to us.

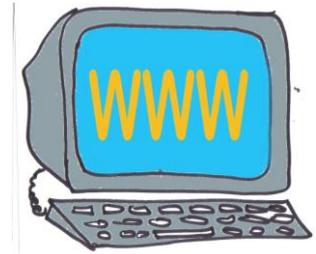


What we have done so far

We do our best to meet people's needs so they can fully use our services. We also ask people to tell us how best to communicate with them. We always try to make reasonable adjustments so that people can tell us about their complaint. For example: Easy Read documents, translation services, asking experts about people's needs and home visits.



We make important documents in other formats like Braille or on CD. These are translated into other languages. Our website has also been improved to be more accessible.



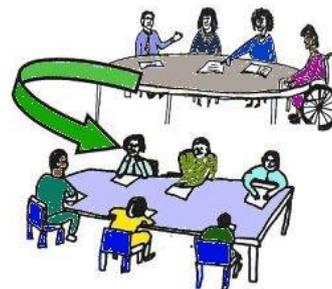
We have always kept equality records about the people who use our service. This has been added to by asking equality questions as part of a customer survey. We have used the results of the survey to improve things. For example, people can now make complaints by phone, email or through our website.



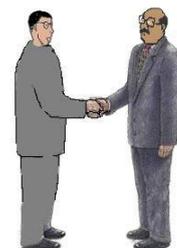
Our staff have been trained on equality and diversity. This helps make our service meet people's needs better. It also helps us to spot when a public service provider fails to do its equality duty.



We meet with other organisations to talk about our work and get their point of view. We also make sure they can help people who need to use our service.



We have also worked with the Older People's and Children's Commissioners who we share information with.

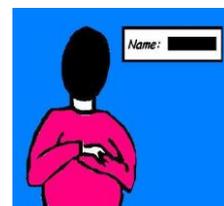


Our Aims



As mentioned on pages 8-10, there are 4 key aims which support our Equality Plan. Appendix A sets out new actions necessary for our Equality Plan.

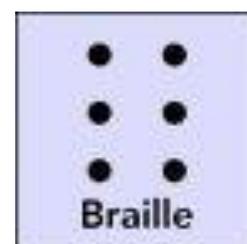
Appendix B shows a breakdown of our service users over the last 5 years. Appendix C sets out the information we keep about our staff. For both of these, people have the choice whether to fill out the form or not. Also, service users don't have to give their name. This information is used to shape our equality aims, along with information from other places.



1. To offer a service with excellent customer care. Increase awareness of our service and do our best to make it accessible and easy to use. Equality Plan aims that support this:



- We will continue contacting service users in the best way that suits them.
- We will continue making documents in different formats.



- We will continue looking into other ways of communicating to make using our service as easy as possible. We will keep up with new technology that helps this.

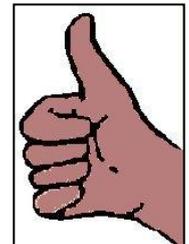


- We will find out more about the people who use our service. Then we will have a better idea about how to improve.



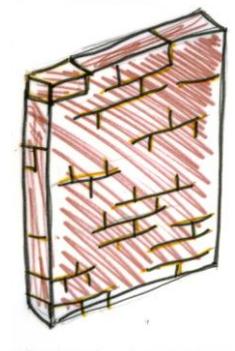
- Every year we will check how well we are reaching people in the community to make sure it helps us meet our targets.

2. To handle complaints to a high level of quality, dealing with them thoroughly and fairly and communicating clearly.



Equality Plan aims that support this:

- We have 3 procedures to follow when handling complaints. We will carefully think about how we can improve things for anyone belonging to a protected group.
- We will continue to make adjustments to overcome any barriers people might face while making their complaint.



3. To use the experience gained from our investigations to improve public services and policy.



Equality Plan aims that support this:

- We will use our findings to identify when a public body is not following the Equality Act to help support a more inclusive society.

- We will help grow confidence in local councils by letting them know about issues to do with discrimination and bullying.



4. To look at and improve the way we work and make the best use of the public money given to us.



Equality Plan aims that support this:

- If we want to change our way of working we will think about the effect on people from protected groups and talk to them about it.



- We will get better information about our staff to make sure they are treated fairly.

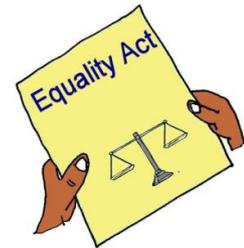
- We will do our best to make sure our staff properly represents the people who live in Wales.



- We will continue to give training on equality and diversity issues.



- We will make sure that equality guidelines are given to organisations that want to work with us. We will ask them for evidence that they are following the Equality Act as well.



Appendix A

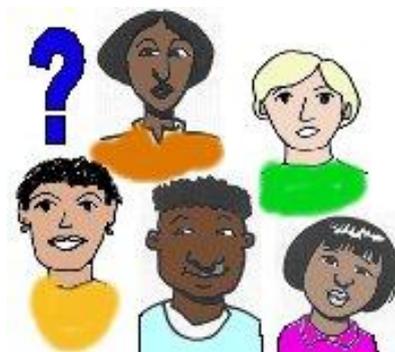
Actions to support our Equality Plan



This section sets out new actions to help us achieve our Equality Plan.

1. Look at how well we are reaching people in the community to make sure it supports our equality aims.

2. Improve the information we gather about our users, including information about the results of different groups of people's complaints. (This will be kept confidential from people dealing with the complaint). This will be in place from April 2013.



3. We will look at our complaints process to see if any changes to do with protected groups are needed. This will be done by the end of March 2013.

We will make a factsheet to tell you what will happen to the complaints we receive. This will be done by the end of May 2013.



4. We will look at the guidelines we have for local councils and see if more information is required on discrimination and bullying. This will be done by December 2012.



5. We will change the way we gather information on staff and pay. We will then have a record of age, disability and ethnic groups. We will gather information on other protected areas and this will be available from April 2013.



6. We will look at our staffing policies to see how fair they are and talk to staff if appropriate. This will be done by the end of March 2013.



7. We will change our policies for buying and agreements with other organisations to make sure they include rules on equality. This will be done by the end of September 2012.



8. We will look at all our current policies to make sure they are fair. All new policies will be checked as well. We will talk to the relevant people if appropriate. This will be done from April 2012.



Appendix B

- Information on Equality - Service Users

Sex (Gender)

As of 2001, just over half of the population of Wales are female. In 2005, most complaints were from men. More recently though, it has reduced - just over half of all complaints received are from men.



Age

Children and young people

A very small number of complaints come from people under the age of 18.



Older People

About 1 in 5 people in Wales is over 65. Just over a quarter of complaints are made by people over 65.



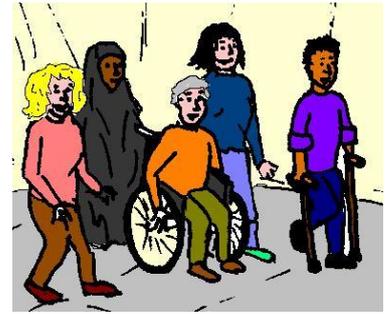
Minority ethnic groups

In 2001, only 1 in 50 people were from a minority ethnic background. In more recent years, this has doubled. Very few complaints received are from minority ethnic groups.



People with Disabilities

About a quarter of Welsh people are disabled or have a long term illness and they make about a third of the complaints we receive.



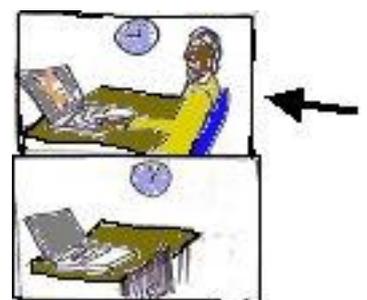
Appendix C - Information on Equality - Staff

People who apply for a job with us are asked to fill out an optional equality form. If they get the job, the information is made part of their staff file.



As of 31st December 2011, information on pay and gender follows:

- There are 42 female staff and 12 male staff.
- All 12 men are permanent staff, as are 40 out of the 42 women.
- 3 women work part time and so does 1 man.
- 28 women and 5 men earn less than £39,000
- 14 women and 7 men earn more than £40,000



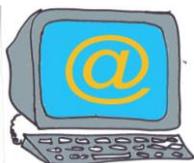
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CF35 5LJ



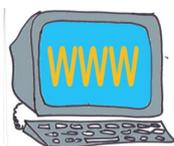
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