



Equality & Diversity
in Local Councils

Equality and Diversity Group

Strategy and Action Plan

2015 - 2017

September 2015

1. Background

The purpose of the Equality & Diversity Group is to prioritise and influence equality and diversity initiatives across local government. The Group attempts to bring together the equality and diversity practices across the sector and in so doing, seeks to integrate the priorities of the Group with the ongoing work of individual councils.

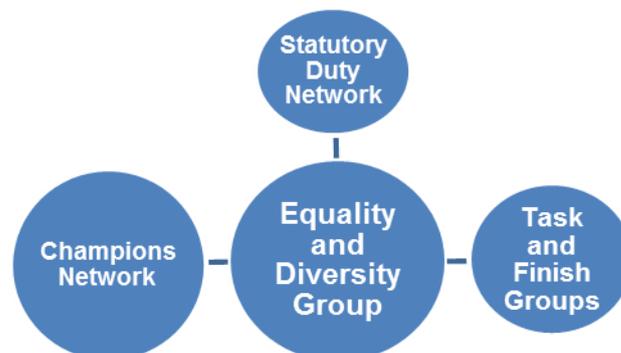
The Group has responsibility for:

- the development of the overall strategic direction for equality and diversity initiatives in local government
- determining priorities and setting objectives
- monitoring progress and reporting to the Local Government Staff Commission on a regular basis

The Group was first constituted in 2011 and was re-constituted in 2015 in the light of the reform of local government with a new Chair who is the Chief Executive of one of the 11 councils, and some additional members to include representatives from external and internal stakeholder groups. The Group meets bi-monthly.

A key feature of the work of the Equality and Diversity Group is the Diversity Champions' Network which is made up of the elected member(s) and officer(s) Champions in each council. The role of the Diversity Champion is to champion equality and diversity in individual councils and to act as first point of contact for enquiries and provide advice, guidance and support on equality and diversity issues within the organisation. The Network provides a forum of support and networking for the Diversity Champions, and meets quarterly to provide training and development opportunities for the Champions.

Sub groups such as the Statutory Duty Network continue to meet, together with specific task and finish groups which will be established as required for example, to develop a model equality scheme or to prepare draft model employment policies across the local government.



2. Membership

The membership of the Equality and Diversity Working Group is drawn from stakeholder bodies across the local government sector and includes Chief Executives, Diversity Champions, Equality Officers and HR Officers in councils, trade union officers and Staff Commission members, as well as representatives from external stakeholder groups.

The current membership comprises:

Chair (LGCEG)	Jacqui Dixon, Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey BC
LGSC	Lindsay Boal, Commission Member Monica Burns, Commission Member Willie Francey, Commission Member Bernie Kelly, Commission Member Adrian Kerr, Chief Executive
Disability Action	Patricia Bray, Statutory Duty and Policy Officer
Diversity Champions	Cllr Mark Brooks, Ards and North Down BC Cllr Michael Goodman, Antrim and Newtownabbey BC Cllr Cáthal Mallaghan, Mid Ulster DC
Community Relations Council	Jacqueline Irwin, Chief Executive
Equality Commission for NI	Patrice Hardy, Equality Development Manager (Public Sector) Brenda Hodgkinson, Equality Officer
NIPSA	Geraldine Alexander, Assistant Secretary
LGCEG	Roger Wilson, Chief Executive, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon BC
PPMA NI	Alison Long, Senior HR and OD Advisor, Belfast CC
Statutory Duty Network	Mary Hanna, Policy & Diversity Officer, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon BC
DemocraShe	Bronagh Hinds
Equality Coalition	Emma Patterson-Bennett
Rainbow Project	Gavin Boyd, Policy and Advocacy Manager

3. Purpose of the Strategy and Action Plan

This document has been developed to guide the work of the Equality and Diversity Group in the longer term, and to focus on the action plan for 2015 - 2017. It was developed following consultation with members of the Equality and Diversity Group, the groups which the members represent, and other stakeholders.

In focussing on these activities, continuing to work with our stakeholders and responding to their needs, the Equality and Diversity Group aims to support and assist councils to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations as an Employer, a Service Provider and a Civic Leader.

This will be done by working in partnership with councils:

- to address equality and diversity issues
- to ensure continuity of the ongoing equality and diversity activities
- to support cross-sectoral initiatives
- to involve and inform external stakeholders
- to pilot new equality and diversity initiatives

4. Reporting Mechanisms

Progress on meeting the activities detailed in the action plan will be:

- reported to members of the Equality and Diversity Group at their quarterly meetings
- a copy of the minutes of the Equality and Diversity Group meetings will be included on the Staff Commission meeting agendas for information
- periodic reports will be sent to councils through the Equality and Diversity e-zine
- members will report back to the stakeholder group they represent

5. Equality and Diversity Framework

This strategy and action plan supports the Equality and Diversity Framework which details a Council's statement of intent and approach to meeting their equality and diversity obligations and to demonstrate their compliance with them. The Framework covers everyone who uses a council's services, facilities and accesses information.

6. Outputs

The Strategy and Action Plan will result in the following benefits for the local government sector:

- officers and members will be well informed on equality and diversity issues
- councils will be representative of the communities which they serve
- local government will be recognised for best practice in equality and diversity

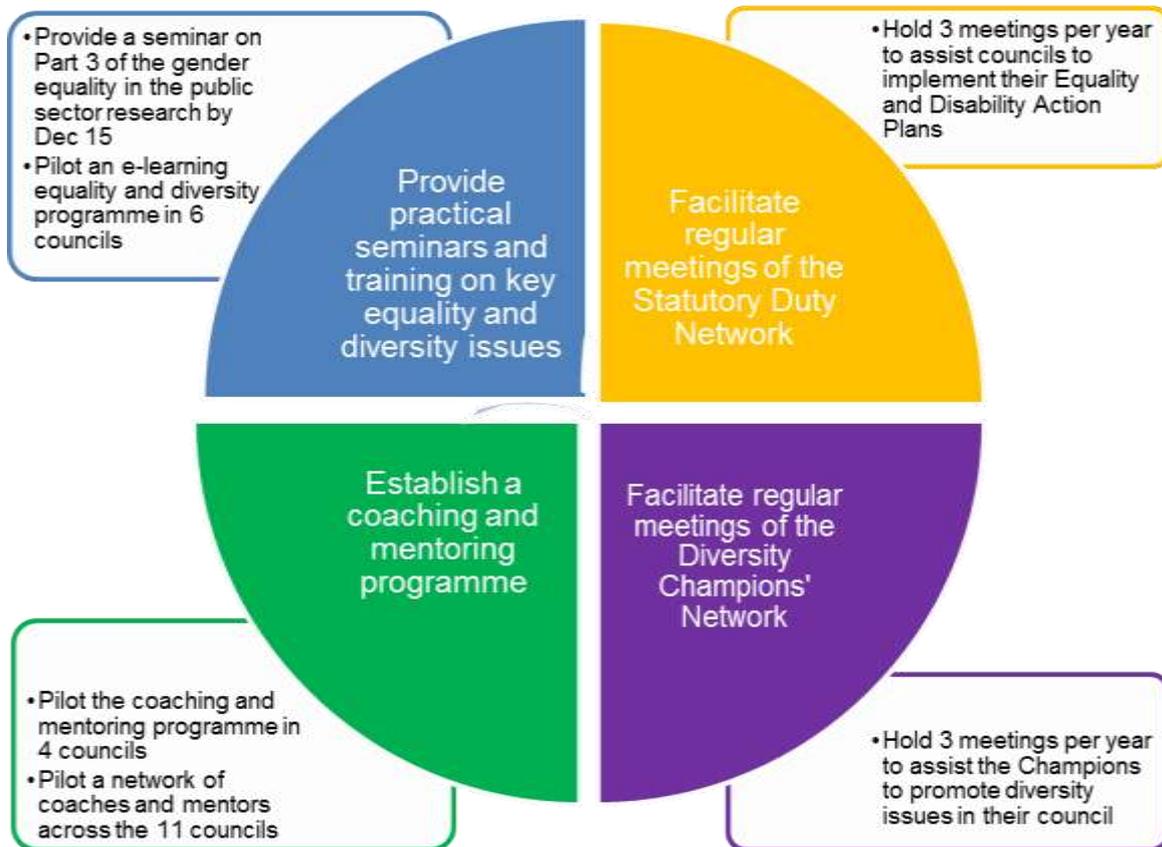
- officers and members will be supported and developed through a coaching and mentoring network
- external stakeholders will have a mechanism to share their views and information with councils
- councils will benefit from cross-sectoral working and initiatives
- councils will be able to demonstrate to their citizens that they are committed to equality and diversity in the development of policy and the delivery of services to the whole community which they serve

Strategy and Action Plan

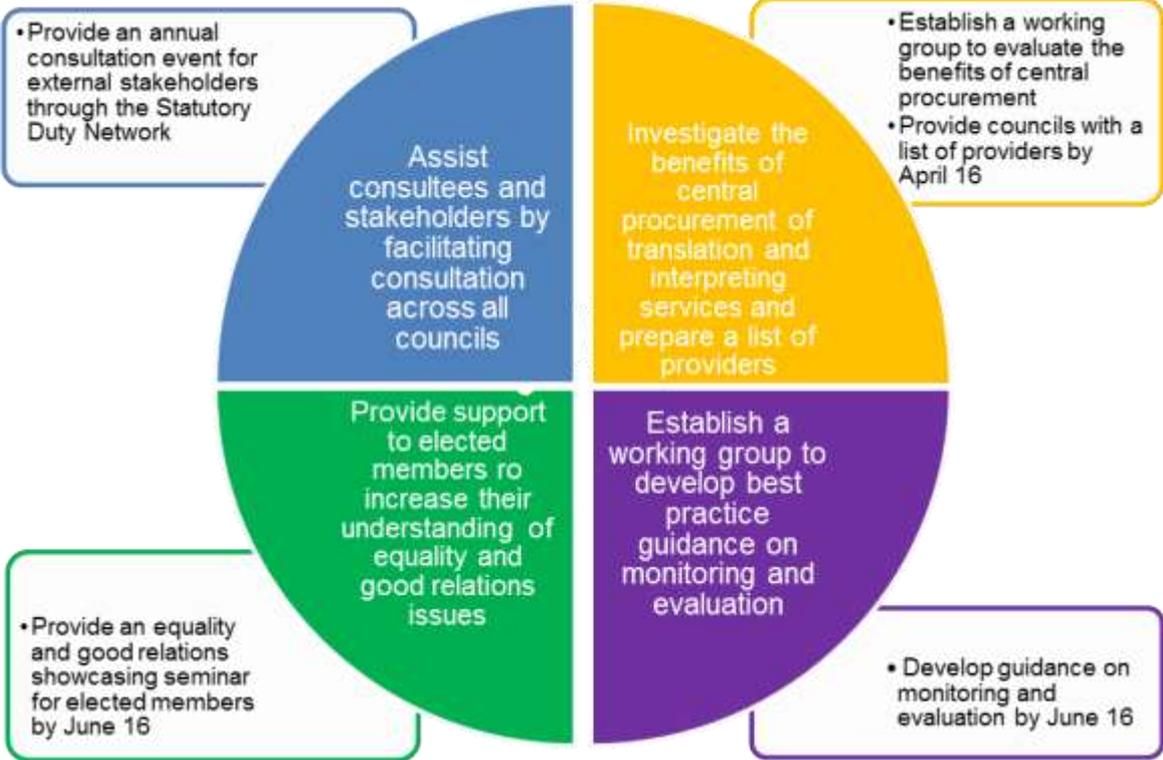
2015 - 2017

Key Strategic Objective: By working with our stakeholders and responding to their needs, we aim to support and assist councils to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations as an Employer, a Service Provider and a Civic Leader.

As an Employer:



As a Service Provider:



As a Civic Leader:

