SPCB Gender Equality Scheme Review 2008

As part of our Gender Equality Scheme we developed a three year action plan with the aim of helping the organisation to fulfil its Gender Equality duty. This progress report highlights the steps we have taken over the year from December 2007, when our Gender Equality Scheme was first published, to December 2008.

The Gender Equality duty places a duty on all public bodies to effectively promote gender equality and eliminate sex discrimination. This duty also places positive, proactive responsibilities in working towards a more equal society by embedding gender equality into the way in which they carry out their functions and to demonstrate that they treat men and women fairly.

In our first year of working towards meeting both those duties and responsibilities the organisation has achieved a number of actions set out in the scheme. Some of those achievements are highlighted in this report along with what we aim to deliver during 2009 in terms of gender equality.

Our Achievements in 2008

The organisation has successfully used the scheme as a tool in continuing to work towards mainstreaming gender equality throughout its work. Some of the actions achieved during 2008 are detailed below with further information available in the full action plan table.

- A policy statement on domestic abuse was developed and published during the year along with guidance to help raise awareness of the issue and the impact on individuals to managers and staff as well as provide information about the support available.

- The Maternity Mentoring project pilot has been continuing successfully during the year with 14 out of 21 women taking up the opportunity of maternity mentoring since the pilot commenced.

- A review of the Special Leave policy has taken place with various issues including gender equality built into the considerations around special leave. The decisions on special leave have now been realigned to line managers and guidance has been developed to ensure that consistency across the organisation in considering requests for special leave is achieved.

- An area of under representation which was identified within the Parliament during 2008 was Security. It was highlighted that more female officers were required to adequately provide an appropriate search service to visitors to the Parliament. During the summer a Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR) clause of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 was used to recruit women to the Security Team. Ten female staff were recruited to cover both full-time and part-time posts thereby improving the gender balance of this office and their ability to provide a necessary service.
Our recruitment guidance and procedures were updated during the year to include the need to have a mixed gender recruitment panel wherever possible. For all new posts, consideration is given to the gender balance of the area when deciding on whether the post will be advertised internally or externally.

During the year our breastfeeding and parenting facilities have also been enhanced to provide a more welcoming, comfortable and suitable space for parents to care for their children and for expectant mothers to use as a necessary rest space.

Our priorities for 2009

During 2009 we will be continuing to work on our current Gender Equality Scheme actions as well as looking to build gender equality actions into our new Single Equality Scheme. Some of our priorities for 2009 will be:

- Once our new Equality Impact Assessment process is established ensure that it is fully implemented throughout the organisation during 2009.

- Ensure employment and service related monitoring in relation to gender is carried out and analysed across the organisation. Some examples of this are in recruitment data, use of special leave policy, attendance at events and the type of events held, temporary promotion and progression as well as the other monitoring mentioned in the Scheme.

- Developing and issuing guidance to MSPs and their staff on the gender equality duties and their responsibilities as well as best practice advice.

- Roll out of the Maternity Mentoring scheme following the pilot and receipt of accreditation for the Scheme and our mentors.

- Transgender awareness raising exercise throughout the organisation.

- Building equality considerations into our procurement policies, guidance and relevant contracts and developing monitoring processes which include equality considerations. These will include gender equality.

- Develop guidance for line managers on working effectively with part-time staff.