National Assembly for Wales Commission (Assembly Commission)

Annual Equality Report

2008

Contents

Foreword

This is the Assembly Commission's Equality Report for 2008 where we are pleased to provide an update on our work in promoting equality over 2008 in improving access to our services, employment opportunities, proceedings and our buildings.

We have developed a Strategic Equality Statement which outlines our strategy for equality for the next three years. Also, we have recently published our new integrated Equality Scheme (2008-2011). The accompanying Action Plan details our priorities and the actions we need to take to tackle inequality, as an employer and as an organisation that interacts with the public.

We aim to promote a best practice approach to promoting equality and removing any barriers to achieving this. This Report provides an update of the actions from our previous equality schemes which we have, where appropriate carried over into our Equality Scheme and Action Plan.

This Report also looks forward to 2009 and sets out our priorities for the coming year. We intend to build on our achievements in 2008 and ensure we continue to make progress in promoting equality in all we do.

Presiding Officer and Chair of the Assembly Commission
The Rt Hon the Lord Elis-Thomas AM

Introduction

What the report contains

- A progress update of the equality work that has been undertaken and achieved across the organisation in general and in terms of the public sector equality duties on disability, gender and race over 2008

- An outline of our priorities for building on our equality work in 2009

Equality of Opportunity Committee
The Equality and Access Team, in conjunction with the Assembly Commission, reports annually to the Equality of Opportunity Committee with an Annual Equality Report.

1. Activities and Progress During 2008

Development of the Assembly Commission's Strategic Policy Statement for Equality

The Assembly Commission has recently published its Strategic Policy Statement which outlines its commitment to promoting equality and serves as a three-year strategy for developing the organisation's equality agenda. The Statement is available on the Assembly Commission's website at http://www.assemblywales.org/abthome/equalities/abt-equalities-strategic-statement.htm

Development of Equality Scheme 2008-2011

The Equality and Access Team has also developed a single, integrated Equality Scheme which covers the following equality strands: age, disability, gender/gender identity, race, religion/belief and sexual orientation. An accompanying Action Plan sets out the actions we need to take to promote equality, eliminate discrimination and remove barriers to equality.

Both the Scheme and Action Plan were developed following a period of consultation and involvement with staff, TUS colleagues, Assembly Members and members of the public via:

- Staff focus groups
- Staff networks
- E-mail surveys to staff and Assembly Members
- Online consultation widely publicised by e-mail
- Using summer events, for example, the National Eisteddfod to gather information
- Equality and Access Team approaching visitors in the Senedd on a weekend
- Our staff Equality Steering Group
- Using conduits/contacts to seek and collate the views of ethnic minority groups and using consultation documentation in a variety of community languages
- External Disabled Users' Forum

A summary of responses to the consultation and involvement exercise is at Appendix Four of the Equality Scheme which is available by contacting our Equality and Access Team or on our website at: http://www.assemblywales.org/abthome/equalities/equality-scheme-home-page.htm

Members of the public giving their views to our consultation in the Senedd

Members of the public giving their views at the National Eisteddfod

Equality and Access Team

The Team is based in the Assembly Commission's Corporate Unit and has built up capacity over 2008 and reached full complement in April 2008. An Equality Manager, Policy Officer and Access Adviser are available to support staff and Assembly Members and liaise with service areas across the organisation to ensure that any policies and working practices do not discriminate against or disadvantage people in any way. The Team actively promotes and raises awareness of equality of opportunity issues to staff, Assembly Members and the public.

Award-winning Operation Black Vote Scheme

Between October 2007 and May 2008, the Assembly Commission administered an Assembly Member shadowing scheme which involved people from ethnic minority communities shadowing Assembly Members. The Scheme has been a tremendous success, with participants continuing to develop their political careers, whether on a community, local authority, National Assembly or Westminster level. The Scheme also won the Hansard Society Democracy Award at the Channel 4 Political Awards. We are currently scoping the design of a multi-strand Assembly Member and Local

Councillor Mentoring Scheme and aim to extend this to other under-represented groups.

Assembly Members and Shadowing Scheme participants

2. Progress on Actions 2007- 08 (Race, Disability and Gender Equality Duties)

As a public body, the Assembly Commission acts in accordance with the public sector equality duties on race, disability and gender. Actions from the schemes that preceded our integrated Equality Scheme have been reviewed and where appropriate, have been subsumed into our Equality Scheme and Action Plan.

Here we set out the progress we have made in particular areas over the last year.

Race

Required Outcome: Strategic Management, dedicated resource and management sight of race issues

- We have a resourced Equality and Access Team in place and our Equality Steering Group is chaired by the Chief Executive and Clerk to the Assembly Commission. The Management Board and Assembly Commission receive regular papers on equality-related issues.

Required Outcome: monitor take-up of community language downloads

- We now have the capability to monitor take-up of 'Your Guide to the Assembly' in other community languages on our website and will collect statistics from January 2009 to monitor demand.

Required Outcome: review recruitment advertising procedures to see how we can attract a diverse workforce.

- Earlier this year, the Equality and Access Team commissioned an external review of our recruitment policies and practices and their effect on our organisation's ability to increase the representation of ethnic minority people in our workforce. The review made recommendations which we have put into place. Some of which are included below.

Required Outcome: Increase recruitment outreach and awareness-raising activities amongst ethnic minority people

- A secondee from Minority Ethnic Women's Network (MEWN) Cymru undertook a six-month secondment with the HR team. As well as assisting with HR-related duties, the secondee assisted the Equality and Access Team in engaging with local ethnic minority people and gathering evidence from a wide range of people in different communities to inform the consultation and involvement process for the Equality Scheme.

- The Equality and Access Team also used the contacts forged with the shadowing participants of the Operation Black Vote Scheme to seek feedback from ethnic minority people on the development of our Equality Scheme.

- Over 2009, HR will pilot workplace assignments for ethnic minority people. The purpose of the assignments is to raise awareness of the Assembly Commission as a potential employer and offer the chance of work experience within a parliamentary environment.

- The Recruitment Team works in partnership with Cardiff South Enterprise Centre (CSEC) and informs it about job opportunities. HR visited CSEC on three occasions within the reporting period and arranged for ethnic minority people to visit the Assembly Commission to learn more about what it is like to work here.

- The Recruitment Team have also attended two career fairs – one at Fitzalan School and the other at County Hall to promote opportunities within our organisation to ethnic minority people. School pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds have also undertaken work experience placements in the organisation over the year.

Disability

Required Outcome: provision of accommodation and facilities which are secure, accessible, available, fit for purpose and safe

The Office and Facilities Management Team and the Equality and Access Team are overseeing a rolling programme of adjustments in the Senedd and Tŷ Hywel. Some examples of adjustments made so far have been:

- Installing blinds in the Senedd to reduce sun glare for staff, Assembly Members and visitors to the Senedd
- Information pods for wheelchair users are being designed for the Siambr's viewing gallery
- A Braille signage audit has been conducted for Tŷ Hywel
- Automated doors have been installed on the ground and first floor public thoroughfares in Tŷ Hywel – allowing independent way-finding for all users
- A mobile ramp has been purchased for events in Siambr Hywel and can be used elsewhere in the building

Required Outcome: establish disabled staff network

- Our Equality and Access Adviser has established a network for disabled staff and this includes staff who are also supportive of disability equality issues or who may have disabled friends/relatives.

The network feeds into policy development and acts as a support mechanism for disabled staff.

Required Outcome: feedback from disabled people/disability organisations, involvement and participation

- Earlier this year, the Equality and Access Team established an external Disabled Users' Forum to assist in developing our work on promoting disability equality. The group is made up of contacts from across Wales.
- The Equality and Access Team ensured that alternative formats were available for the consultation and involvement exercise for the Equality Scheme, enabling inclusive participation.

Required Outcome: people (staff and AMs/AMSS) have equipment to do their jobs
- Staff and Assembly Members have regular Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessments to ensure that they have the correct equipment in place to enable them to do their jobs safely and effectively. A number of our staff use voice recognition technology and various adaptations have been made for members of staff to work more comfortably.

Member of staff using voice recognition equipment

Required Outcome: events and proceedings are accessible

- Our Assembly Booking Line can help members of the public attending meetings, observing Assembly proceedings or simply visiting the building to get the most out of the experience by helping to identify any requirements for example, the need for an induction loop, British Sign Language Interpretation.

- Committee Service staff also use an accessibility checklist for venues for committee meetings if held outside the Senedd.

Gender

Required Outcome: increase number of women visitor liaison/security officers

- The Equality and Access Team will work with the Security Team for any future recruitment exercises to identify ways of encouraging women to apply for these roles to meet business requirements.

Required Outcome: assess the need to undertake an equal pay review

- An equal pay review is scheduled for 2009-10

3. Our Workforce

Workforce Profile - Staff Equality Monitoring Survey

An all-staff Equality Monitoring Survey was undertaken in March 2008 and staff were asked to anonymously declare their age, gender, grade, any disability, race, religion/belief and sexual orientation. This was designed to obtain a profile of our workforce in relation to equality. Staff were also given an opportunity to feed back any suggestions to improve equality of opportunity for our workforce. These suggestions have been taken into account in our Action Plan.

The survey was voluntary and 76% of our workforce responded. We intend to repeat the survey every three years in line with this Scheme's lifespan.

Where we have data from our existing HR IT system, we have used this below for age, gender and grade.

**Figure 1: Age** (As of 31 March 2008)

Age	Number of staff (by age group)	% by age group %
<20	2	1
20-24	29	9
25-29	56	17
30-34	51	16
35-39	30	9
40-44	33	10
45-49	41	13
50-54	29	9
55-59	33	10
>60	19	6
Total	323	

Figure 2: Gender by Grade (As of 31 March 2008)

Grade	Women	Men	Total
Team Support	33	86	119
Personal Secretary	3	0	3
Executive Officer	29	26	55
Higher Executive Officer	54	22	76
Senior Executive Officer	18	16	34
G7	12	12	24
G6	4	2	6
G3	1	2	3
G2	1	0	1
Salaried	0	2	2
	155	168	323

Where we do not have HR data for disability, sexual orientation, and religion/belief) we have used the survey results. We have not broken this down in order to protect staff privacy.

**Figure 3 – Disability** (As of 31 March 2008)
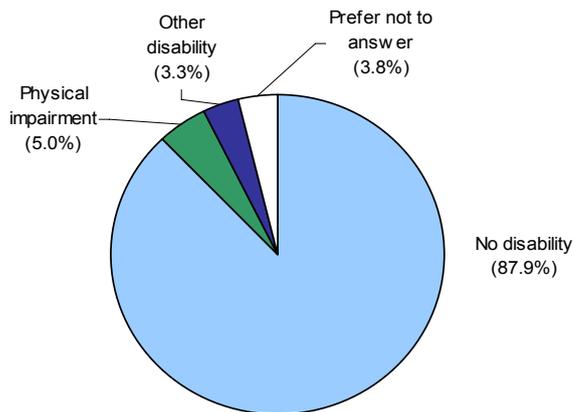
87.9 per cent of respondents stated that they did not have a disability.

5 per cent of respondents had a physical impairment, while 3.3 per cent had a different type of disability. These included the following categories: learning disability/difficulty, sensory impairment, mental health condition and other long standing illness or health condition.

3.8 per cent of respondents did not wish to answer the question on disability.

**Figure 4 - Race** (As of 31 March 2008)
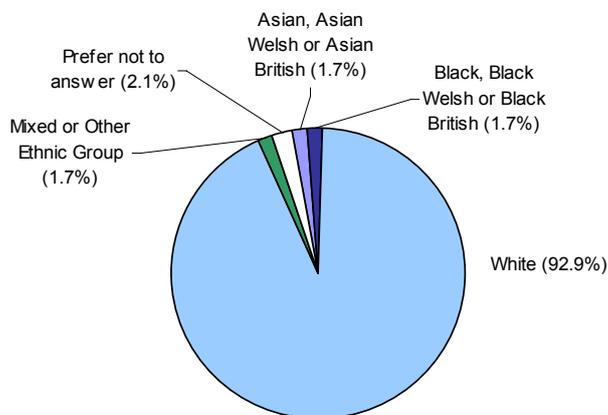
Of employees who responded to the survey, 92.9 per cent were white and 5.0 per cent were non-white. This compares to a non-white population of 4.5 per cent for the officially defined Cardiff travel-to-work area[1].

77 per cent of the people who recorded that they were white were in the White Welsh category.

 2.1 per cent chose not to answer the question on race.

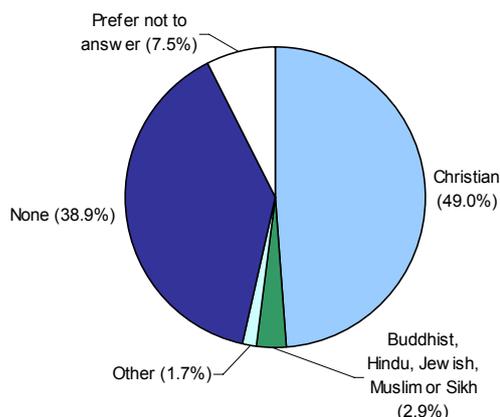**Figure 5: Sexual Orientation** (As of 31 March 2008)
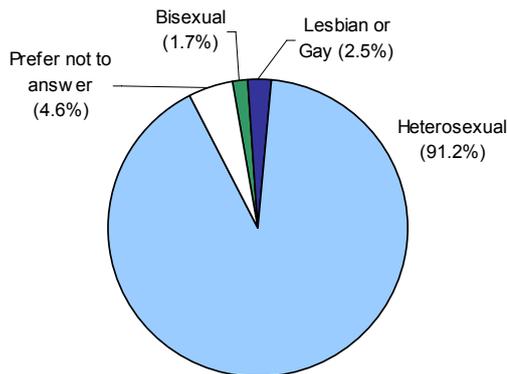
Of the respondents to the survey, 91.2 per cent were heterosexual.

In total, lesbian, gay and bisexual employees made up 4.2 per cent of the respondents.

4.6 per cent of people did not wish to record their sexual orientation.

Figure 6 -   Religion/Belief (As of 31 March 2008)

Of the people who responded to the survey, the largest religious group was Christian (49 per cent). The second largest group (38.9 per cent) stated that

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[1] From previous MRS analysis of 2001 Census figures.

they had no religious belief. 7.5 per cent chose not to answer the question on religion.

Issues Arising for the Workforce in the Context of the Existing Data and Staff Survey

Age: no issues were raised

Disability: some staff preferred not to answer the question on disability in the staff survey which might indicate that more support is needed for disabled staff. Our Disabled Staff Network is a mechanism by which to support and reassure our disabled staff.

Gender: where there are gender imbalances in grades we will review and address any likely causes

While no member of staff declared that they were transgender, as an organisation, we need to feel confident that we can support new staff members or existing staff members should they self-identify as transgender.

Race: we need to ensure we continue to attract a diverse workforce and can measure our performance on this by the number of applicants we attract who are from diverse backgrounds. See Recruitment and Selection paragraph.

Religion/Belief: no issues were raised

Sexual Orientation: Again, some staff preferred not to answer the question on sexual orientation in the staff survey which might indicate that more support is needed for LGBT staff. Our LGBT Staff Network is a mechanism by which to support and reassure our LGBT staff.

Minority Ethnic Recruitment Data and Outreach Activities
The ethnic minority recruitment monitoring data for the Assembly Commission is below (in accordance with the Race Equality Duty):

Breakdown of Employees (as of 31 March 2008)	
Number of employees	323
No. that have declared their ethnic background	302
No. of people from BME groups	14
Current Breakdown of Employees (as of 1 November 2008)	
Current number of employees	332
No. that have declared their ethnic background	311
No. of people from BME groups	14
External Applications*	
Total number of applicants (that have declared their ethnic background) in current year (from 1 April 2008)	422
No. of applications from BME groups (from 1 April 2008)	21
Total number of applicants (that declared their ethnic	445

background) in last financial year (April 2007 - March 2008)	
No. of applications from BME groups in last financial year (April 2007 - March 2008)	34
Appointments	
No. of external appointments in current year (from 1 April 2008)	19
No. appointments from BME groups (from 1 April 2008)	0 (0%)
No. external appointments in last financial year (April 2007 – March 2008)	71
No. appointments from BME groups (April 2007 - March 2008)	3 (4%)

*Please note: many applicants fail to submit our equal opportunities monitoring form at application stage.

Flexible Working Arrangements

Assembly Business (e.g. plenary and committees) operates on the principle of family-friendly working hours: timetabling Assembly Business prior to 9.00am or after 6.00pm on a working day is avoided where possible. A number of flexible working options are open to enable staff and staff with caring responsibilities to balance work and home commitments, including reduced hours, compressed hours, part-time, flexi-time and term-time working. The needs of staff are balanced with business needs.

Employee Support: Staff Networks

We have a Disabled Staff Network and an LGBT Staff Network run by staff for staff and they are both formally recognised by the Assembly Commission and have their own budgets. The purpose of the networks is to serve as support networks for disabled and LGBT staff and to feed into policy development via involvement in equality impact assessment and other methods of consultation.

Recruitment Advertising

The Recruitment Team and Equality and Access Team work closely together to review recruitment literature and ensure that a best practice approach to equality is integrated into recruitment procedures and practices. In particular, we have considered how job adverts might be worded, designed and advertised to reflect our commitment to promoting equality and valuing diversity.

Stonewall's 'Starting Out' Guide and Workplace Equality Index

The National Assembly for Wales Commission is included in Stonewall's 'Starting Out – Lesbian and Gay Recruitment Guide 2008/09' as a gay-friendly employer aimed at students and those wishing to change their careers.

We received an encouraging rating in Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index for 2008 and have made a submission for the 2009 index. The results of this will be available early next year.

Equality Training
Equality training is included in our Induction Training package for new members of staff.

The Equality and Access Team is working with service areas across the organisation to develop core equality training on the Equality Scheme and awareness-raising for all staff. Bespoke equality training will be identified and developed with staff in relation to the business needs of service areas and will include training on the requirements of the public sector equality duties.

The Equality and Access Team will work with Assembly Members and Assembly Members and their staff to identify appropriate, bespoke training and awareness-raising opportunities where required.

Deaf Awareness and British Sign Language (BSL) Training
We have a contract in place to provide staff, Assembly Members and Assembly Members support staff with BSL training. In November, 'Meet and Greet/Deaf Awareness Taster Sessions' were rolled-out to staff on a voluntary basis with a view to advanced courses being rolled out next year.

Awareness-Raising Initiatives
Over the last year, the Equality and Access Team has attempted to raise awareness of equality-related issues, across all the equality strands amongst staff and Assembly Members using a variety of media. Over 28 initiatives have been publicised within the organisation via the staff weekly bulletin, the 'Slate' Magazine, staff and Members' intranet homepage, posters and information pamphlets.

4. Engagement and Involvement

Disabled Users' Forum
We have established contact with a group of disabled service users across Wales who are helping us develop policies and procedures which promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

Events in Senedd
The Senedd and Tŷ Hywel have hosted a number of equality-related events, including report launches, awareness-raising and celebratory events for representative groups across the equality strands.

In particular, on 3 December we will have hosted a celebratory event to mark the International Day of Disabled People in Tŷ Hywel and the Senedd to recognise the achievements of disabled people through their representative voluntary organisations. The Equality and Access Team has invited representative partner organisations which reflect the diverse and often under-represented disabled people within Wales, to make up the steering group for the event.

This event has also been organised to provide the opportunity for our staff, Assembly Members and their staff to learn more about the issues and barriers that disabled people confront on a daily basis. The day will involve debates, story-telling, performance-based workshops and presentations from individuals and representative organisations.

Stonewall Diversity Champions' Network Seminar – Supplier Diversity
In August 2008, the Assembly Commission hosted Stonewall Cymru's Diversity Champions' Network seminar on the theme of 'Ensuring Supplier Diversity'. The event was successful in that it was the most attended network seminar to-date in Wales and importantly, it provided an opportunity to network and share best practice between the public and private sectors.

Attendees at our Stonewall Diversity Champions' Network Seminar

Outreach: Accessibility at the Summer Events 2008 (Royal Welsh Show and the Eisteddfod)

Structure

The structure of the temporary stand was fully DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant, and was assessed by our contractors to ensure full accessibility. This included ensuring there was a DDA compliant ramp that ran from the structure to the main pathway. We ensured that accessibility within the structure was good allowing clear access and space between each of our activities and stations.

Activities

All information and posters publicising our activities were fully bilingual, were of the minimum size 12 font and colours allowed significant contrast between the text and the background.

ICT Facilities

On our stand this year, we made sure that at least one of our computer stations was at the correct level for wheelchair users, and we had Braille and audio cassette publications available upon request.

5. Providing Support for Members

The Work of Assembly Committees

Committee Service is responsible for supporting the work of Assembly Committees. In doing so, the service tries to build consideration of equality issues into all of its work. For example, by trying to ensure:

- that committees have the information they need, through relevant briefings and papers, to exercise their scrutiny role in a way that fully recognises the impact of equality issues;

- that the work of committees is accessible and that those with diverse requirements are able to contribute equally to committees' work;

- that committee reports, and other information, is made available in formats that provide equal access for all.

These are some brief examples of how Committees have used the support provided by Committee Service to help them in their work:

- Alongside its report on support for people with dyslexia, the Enterprise and Learning Committee produced a summary of the report. This was aimed at aiding use and understanding of the report and making its findings accessible to those who are coping with dyslexia. The font and design of the main report was also designed to be as user friendly as possible for the main stakeholders.

- When looking at rural poverty and deprivation, the Rural Development sub-Committee adopted a citizen-centred approach holding focused evidence sessions for children and young people, older people, those who are economically active and those who are economically inactive.

- Arrangements were made for individual Members to visit refuges and talk directly to victims of abuse as part of the Communities and Culture Committee's inquiry into domestic abuse and how services for those suffering from domestic abuse meet the diverse needs of different groups of people.

- For the Children and Young People Committee's report on provision of advocacy services for children and young people, Committee Service staff arranged for an 'easy read' version of the report to be produced. In the same inquiry, Committee Service facilitated the Committee to hear from groups of young people who were concerned about giving evidence in public. This meant the Committee was able to give children the opportunity to be heard on matters affecting their lives.

- In support of the Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee's Inquiry into presumed consent for organ donation, Committee Service and the Assembly's education service arranged discussions around the key issues involving almost 500 school students.

- Committee Service staff have helped support the Petitions Committee by assisting young people with learning difficulties to give evidence at a formal meeting including offering them the use of flash cards to help them feel at ease and briefing their support workers and committee Members in advance of the meeting. The Mencap 'Partners in Politics' Scheme helped staff to enable the Committee to take evidence from pupils in a school setting and in small discussion groups suited to their needs. Guidance documents are also being translated into a range of accessible and multi-lingual formats to broaden the accessibility of the petitions system further.

In addition to these issues, consideration is always given to building equality issues into the remit for committee inquiries and we ensure that calls for evidence are sent to relevant equality organisations and groups so that they can contribute to inquiries.

We also ensure that any external venues for committee meetings are, at least, Disability Discrimination Act compliant, that our website is as user friendly to all groups as possible.

We have also set up a group to look at how we can ensure that the diverse needs of witnesses that appear before Assembly Committees can be better addressed and met.

Members' Research Service (MRS)

MRS support of a Committee inquiry
The lead researcher for the Communities and Culture Committee's domestic abuse inquiry prepared an issues paper for the Committee so that it could identify issues for particular groups or people in certain circumstances easily. The researcher also advised the clerking team and Members to hold a series of themed meetings which concentrated on the experience, needs and service provision for particular groups of people. This advice was taken and the Committee held themed meetings relating to children, people from BME communities and backgrounds, older people and carers. The briefings drafted to support the Committee during each evidence gathering session included specific questions relating to these groups and others including disabled people, gay people, Welsh speakers, people in rural areas, people with no recourse to public funds.

Performance Management and Development Review (PMDR) objectives
The MRS equality lead drafted a list of suggested objectives for colleagues to include in their PMDR and circulated this to the MRS team leaders and further developed it with their help, focussing on some of the specific roles that different teams undertake.

MRS support for WAG draft budget scrutiny

In order to enable Members of Scrutiny Committees to ask a question about the draft Budget in terms of its reflection of WAG policy aims in relation to children and reducing inequalities, the equality lead for MRS emailed all researchers to ask them to include some suggested questions to this effect in their briefings. The equality lead for MRS in conjunction with another researcher provided colleagues with a list of suggested questions focussing on:

- General principles / mainstreaming (how are they reflected in the draft budget; what evidence or methods did WAG use to ensure their budget has a positive impact in terms of equality (e.g. gender budgeting, commissioning of research etc)
- One Wales commitments
- WAG legislative programme
- Equality / children focused spending announcements and funding commitments

Inclusion of equality-related questions in briefing for Assembly Members

Researchers across MRS have included questions in Members' briefings which aim to facilitate Members' equality role. Some of the examples being:

- Children and Young People Committee – this budget briefing focussed entirely on the implications of the draft budget for children and young people

- Communities and Culture Committee - including briefings on Social Justice, Housing and Heritage

- Enterprise and Learning Committee - including briefings on Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

- Equality of Opportunity Committee –the whole briefing focused on scrutinising the extent to which the draft budget reflected a commitment to equality of opportunity, focusing on areas of particular concern for the Committee (e.g. disabled children and older people)

- Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee

- Sustainability Committee

- Rural Development Sub-Committee

6. Providing Services to the Public

Accessible Buildings
A programme of enhancements for Tŷ Hywel and the Senedd building is underway and this is overseen by the Office and Facilities Management Team in conjunction with the Equality and Access Team. We have taken on board suggestions from disabled staff, Assembly Members and members of the public. One of the most notable modifications is the provision of automated accessible doors on ground and first floors of the public corridors in Tŷ Hywel to allow independent way-finding.

Accessible Proceedings
Communications Support (i.e. the provision of induction loop systems, BSL interpretation etc) are available on request with 14 days' notice for viewing plenary or committee proceedings.

Accessible Information
On 2 July, the Equality and Access Team provided the Equality of Opportunity Committee with a draft accessible information policy which was then a work in progress. At its meeting on 20 November, the Committee invited Lorraine Barrett AM, Assembly Commissioner, to its meeting to discuss how this work was being taken forward. The Equality and Access Team in conjunction with the External Communications Team, is working with staff across the organisation to ensure that this policy covers all information outputs and that accessibility considerations are fundamental to the information that we produce.

The Equality and Access Team is developing a toolkit for staff, Assembly Members and their staff (alongside the policy) to enable them to produce accessible information if required.

7. Priorities for 2009

These actions have been identified in our Equality Scheme and Action Plan (2008-2011) and will be our priorities over the coming year:

Equality Training and Awareness-raising
Develop and implement an equality training and awareness-raising programme for staff, Assembly Members and their staff.

All-Wales Assembly Mentoring Scheme
Develop and implement an all-Wales Assembly Member and Local Councillor mentoring scheme targeted at under-represented groups.

Equal Pay Audit
Undertake an Equal Pay Audit.

Impact Assessment Tool
Enhance our existing impact assessment tool and train staff to use it effectively.

Accessible Information Policy
Develop our Accessibility Information Policy and toolkit.

Inter-parliamentary Equality Exchange
Host our first inter-parliamentary equality exchange where we will share best practice with our Equality Team counterparts across the UK.

Annual Equality Report 2009
Publish our Annual Equality Report in December 2009, in keeping with our Equality Scheme and report to the Equality of Opportunity Committee.