

## Consumer Focus Board

Paper 12.1

**Title:** Draft Single Equality Scheme

**Purpose:** For information and discussion

**Date of meeting:** 16 September 2010

**Responsible officer:** Philip Cullum

**Prepared by:** Mark Steinmeyer

**Attachments:** Annex A: Draft Single Equality Scheme

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### 1 Overview

- 1.1 Earlier this year, the Board agreed that the Senior Management Team should develop a Single Equality Scheme for Consumer Focus, with a first draft ready for September 2010 and then the final version to be agreed in March 2011 and implemented in April 2011.
- 1.2 Our aim is by next April to comply not only with the existing equality duties (race, gender and disability) under current legislation, but also the new strands (age, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, sexual orientation and socio-economic disadvantage) outlined in the new Equality Act 2010.
- 1.3 The Single Equality Scheme is intended to set out our commitment, and deliver on our duty, as an employer in providing an equitable work environment and as a consumer champion in ensuring that our work reflects the diverse needs and experiences of all consumers in the UK. It should include a plan of tangible actions that the organisation will deliver over the period ahead.
- 1.4 This paper offers a first draft of a Single Equality Scheme. This draft scheme reflects input from various colleagues and draws on the work that has been taking place across the organisation over the last few months. This includes some ground-breaking work in Consumer Focus Wales on embedding equality and diversity within consumer policy, and important HR initiatives such as staff and Board training on equality, improved collection of equality data and equality assessments of our HR policies.
- 1.5 This draft is very much a starting-point. If the Board is content with this initial draft, we will then embark on a much wider programme of staff and stakeholder engagement and consultation, so that the Scheme and action plan reflect who we are and what we and the people we represent and work with want us to be. We will also have to develop our draft in light of guidance on the new duties, which is not yet published.

### 2 Action for the Board

- 2.1 For discussion and comment prior to initiating a full staff and stakeholder consultation process

### **3 The key issues**

- 3.1 The draft scheme is a framework that will help us fulfil our obligations to the public sector equality duties. It focuses on the achievement of eight tangible outcomes of direct relevance to who we are and what we do.
- 3.2 The draft is a starting point only. **A full consultation process needs to be put in place and a real opportunity given for staff, including unions, and other stakeholders to reflect, comment and contribute.** The consultation process must encourage people to be involved and to consider equality and diversity issues throughout all of our work.
- 3.3 The draft includes an action plan with specific objectives, activities and success measures. This action plan needs to be tested throughout the organisation with the appropriate detail populated by the individuals who will be responsible for delivering against it. As part of this, we will need to specify when activities will be delivered, so proper monitoring can take place.
- 3.4 The action plan, having not yet been tested through a staff consultation process, is not intended to be complete at this stage. Rather, it pulls together a variety of objectives already discussed throughout the organisation – by Board, management and staff – into one place for consideration.
- 3.5 The new provisions that cover all employers will come into effect in October 2010. The full scheme will need to be published for 1 April 2011.

### **4 Resources**

- 4.1 HR will lead on ensuring we meet our requirements as an employer by October 2010, reporting to SMT.
- 4.2 The Deputy Chief Executive will lead on producing an integrated scheme across the 6 areas which fulfils the public sector duty, with the final scheme ready by March 2011.
- 4.3 The Diversity Steering Group will provide critical support to HR and the Deputy Chief Executive in delivering the above.
- 4.4 Sukhvinder Kaur-Stubbs has volunteered to work with and advise the executive throughout the process.

### **5 Next steps**

#### **Remainder of 2010**

- 5.1 Define and initiate a consultation process with staff, including unions, that provides a real opportunity to reflect, comment and contribute to the development of a draft scheme for external consultation. The consultation process must encourage people to be involved and to consider equality and diversity issues throughout all of our work.
- 5.2 Engage key stakeholders and equality groups
- 5.3 Finalise the process for embedding equality and diversity considerations into our policy work via the corporate planning and project management processes. This will build on the work initiated by Consumer Focus Wales and ensure that our 2011 Annual Plan – when released on 1 April 2010 - considers equality and diversity issues in defining our policy work.

#### **For March 2011**

- 5.4 Finalise a Single Equality Scheme for Board approval

#### **For April 2011**

- 5.5 Publish a final Single Equality Scheme.