



Women. Men. Different. Equal.
Equal Opportunities Commission

First steps on the gender equality duty

Guidance for GB public authorities

gender
equality duty

February 2007

STEPS TO MEET THE DUTY

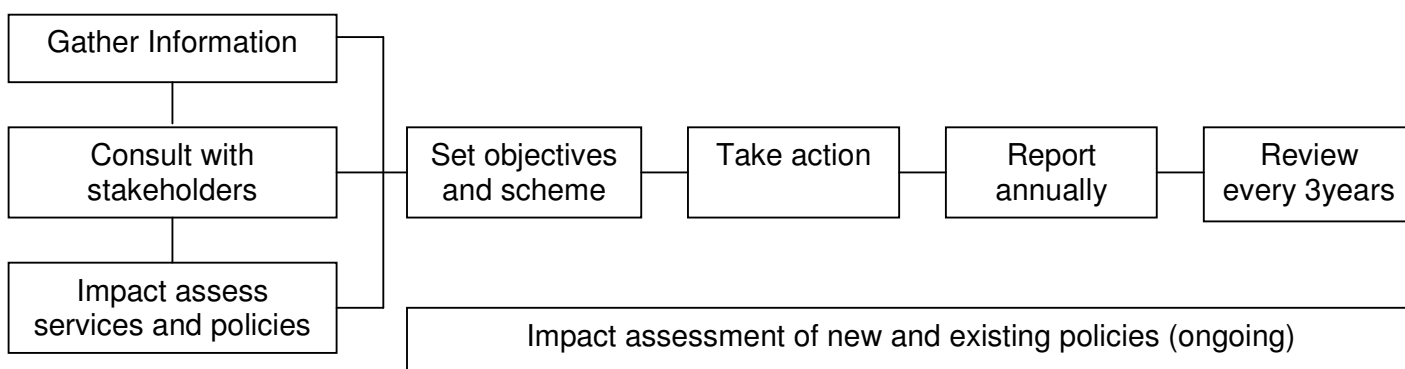
Although the processes of the specific duties can seem complex at first, it is important to remember that your overall aim is to eliminate unlawful sex discrimination and harassment, and to promote equality of opportunity between women and men. The steps laid out in the specific duties are there to help you and are not an end in themselves.

Even if your organisation is only covered by the general duty, the steps set out in the specific duties will be helpful to you. They will allow you to demonstrate that you have taken active, proportionate steps to meet the duty. The development of objectives and a clear action plan will help you to plan and track progress. They will also give you a framework for demonstrating to the EOC, CEHR and to public sector inspectorates that you are taking action on the duty.

Try to focus on the outcomes you want to achieve. You need to consider what success will look like and how you will know you are making progress.

Your key source of information on the duty is the EOC's statutory Code of Practice which makes clear what your legal obligations are. Other guidance documents have been designed to supplement rather than replace the Code.

The various elements of the specific duties feed into each other in the following ways:



Gathering information, consulting and impact assessment

Your first steps should be to gather information on gender equality, at a local and national level, consult with your stakeholders and assess the impact of your policies and services. EOC guidance is available to help you with these three processes. Impact assessment is also an on-going legal requirement under the specific duties, and it should feed into every stage of your work as an organisation.

Objective setting

The findings of these processes should feed into your objective setting which should form the basis of your gender equality scheme.

Taking action

The duty is about results not processes so you will need to establish and implement a concrete action plan to deliver your objectives.

Ongoing impact assessment

You will have to establish processes so that all new policies and practices are assessed for their likely impact on gender equality and amended as appropriate. You will also need to undertake a review of existing policies and practices to assess their impact and whether they need to be amended.

Reporting

Annual reporting follows so that the action you have taken and progress you have made is transparent to internal and external stakeholders.

Review

Finally, reviewing your objectives at least every three years will ensure you are making progress and responding to new issues.

(The Scottish specific duties have an additional step, the development of an equal pay policy statement. Details of this are contained in the Scottish Code of Practice.)