



INTRODUCTION TO THE GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME

Statement from Chairman and Chief Executive

It is the Trust Board's responsibility to provide an environment in which staff are able to flourish and where the Trust's services are delivered without discrimination and, on behalf of the Trust Board we are delighted to introduce this Gender Equality Scheme.

The Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) 1975 as amended by the Equality Act 2006 sets out the responsibilities that the Gloucestershire Partnership NHS Trust has to identify and redress gender-based barriers to equal opportunity which arise for those who are employed by the Trust or use its services. This Gender Equality Scheme sets out how the Trust Board intends to meet these responsibilities. By focusing on the gender-based barriers that people face, this Scheme helps to create an organisation which fully supports all people regardless of gender both as an employer and as a provider of mental health services.

The Trust Board is fully committed to ensuring that gender equality permeates throughout the organisation and will ensure that the Trust will promote gender equality and inclusiveness in everything that it does. This Gender Equality Scheme is a statement of that commitment.

Robert Maxwell
Chair

Shaun Clee
Chief Executive

Why do we need Gender Equality?

There is evidence that women and men have different needs in accessing public services and in the work place men and women can experience unfair and unequal treatment. The same is the case for service users. For example whilst women are expected to live longer than men, they are also more likely to spend more time in poor health or with a disability.

The Trust acknowledges that women in particular can experience inequality and disadvantage in accessing employment or during employment. Men can also experience discrimination and harassment and be negatively affected by gender stereotyping and the pressure of dominant images of masculinity. For example women can be disadvantaged where employment policies and procedures are not family friendly and equally men can be disadvantaged where employment policies and procedures assume that men have no parenting responsibilities. The Trust also recognises that trans-sexual people can experience discrimination and harassment in the workplace.

Although some issues of gender discrimination and disadvantage affect all women or all men, this can often be compounded when linked with race, disability, sexual orientation, age and religion.

Why does the Trust have a Gender Equality Scheme?

The Trust is legally required to have a scheme under the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) 1975 as amended by the Equality Act 2006. This applies to all public bodies such as councils and NHS Trusts, schools, colleges and universities and the emergency services.

Having a scheme is an opportunity for the Trust to be clear that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered and valued equally. It does not mean that all people have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are male or female.

Gender equality is about ensuring that all people are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices.

A scheme and its supporting objectives enables the Trust to focus work on reducing or eliminating disadvantage and inequality for staff and service users around key issues related to gender. This may be where these issues have been identified or it may be that there is a need to seek to identify key issues which may have gone unnoticed. It is also an opportunity to ensure that issues of gender and gender reassignment are managed sensitively and with confidentiality at all levels within the organisation and throughout services.

What does the law require the Trust to do?

The Trust is required to:

- eliminate discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) 1975. This includes discrimination and harassment against transsexual individuals
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Equal Pay Act 1970 (EqPA)
- promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

The Trust is also required to:

- develop and publish a Gender Equality Scheme which must set out its gender equality objectives and supporting actions which will or may be taken.

In preparing the Gender Equality Scheme the Trust must:

- consult employees, service users and others (including staff side organisation)
- gather and take into account any information which can inform the objectives and actions; can inform how Trust policies and practices affect gender equality in the workplace and can inform the delivery of services
- consider any evidence of a gender pay gap and develop objectives and actions to address the causes of this.

In implementing the Gender Equality Scheme the Trust must:

- use information gathered to review objectives and actions and to assess the impact of current and future policies, procedures and practices on gender equality
- consult relevant employees, service users and others (including staff side organisation)
- implement the actions for gathering and using information within three years of publication of the scheme, unless it is unreasonable or impracticable to do so
- review and revise the scheme at least every three years

- report on progress annually.

Who or what is covered by the Gender Equality Scheme?

The Gender Equality Scheme covers all Trust staff, users of Trust services, that is all men and women, and those who are trans-sexual. It applies to those who provide care for those using Trust services, and other organisations which provide care on behalf of the Trust.

Gloucestershire Partnership NHS Trust provides a range of services for about 570,000 people who live in Gloucestershire. The county covers about 1000 square miles. Services are:

- Child and adolescent mental health services
- Specialist substance misuse services
- Mental health and social care services for people of working age
- Mental health services for older people
- Specialist NHS services for people with learning disabilities

The Trust employs about 2200 staff, the majority of whom are women and more than half the workforce work part time.

Who is responsible for ensuring that the Trust is doing everything it should?

The Trust has a 'Diversity Steering Group' which is responsible for developing the scheme and checking progress. There a number of people on the Diversity Steering Group. These people are:

- Non-Executive Director who leads the group
- The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development
- The Trust's senior union representative (Chair of Staff Side)
- Representatives from the Race Awareness Staff Group
- The Deputy Director of Nursing
- The Human Resources Lead for Diversity
- Two Service Directors
- A representative from the Allied Health Professions Forum
- A lead Doctor
- The Clinical Governance Manager
- Head of Information

The group will work with other staff, individuals and groups as needed.

How will you eliminate 'unlawful' discrimination?

We will use a systematic approach to identify and eliminate discrimination when we are developing policies, practices and services and when we review how these are working.

We will work to a timetable to review Trust policies, practices and services, looking for any existing or possible discrimination, and will decide what work needs to be done when and monitor progress. This work will be led by the Diversity Steering Group.

How will you prevent someone being harassed because of their gender?

We have a 'Dignity at Work' policy and procedure. This explains that the Trust expects its staff to treat other staff with dignity and that staff should treat people who use our services with dignity. It also explains that users of our services are expected to treat our staff with dignity. Treating others with dignity includes not harassing others (service users, carers and staff) because of their gender.

Harassment may not always be reported and individuals can feel particularly vulnerable in certain situations. We will therefore do what we can to improve reporting and help people to feel safe from any form of harassment.

There are also other procedures which staff can use for support in situations where they find themselves being harassed or where they are concerned that service users or carers are being harassed. These procedures include mediation, a grievance procedure and a disciplinary procedure.

We can look at all cases of harassment and bullying to understand what is happening to staff, carers and service users and to see what we can do to prevent something similar happening again.

Each year a proportion of our staff are asked to anonymously complete a national survey called the 'Staff Attitude survey'. The survey includes questions about harassment and bullying. The Trust can look at what staff are saying, and use this information to help us understand what we should be doing in the future to reduce harassment of people based on gender. The survey also asks questions about individuals' perceptions of barriers to promotion and work opportunities based on gender, age, race and disability.

When we work with other organisations that provide services on our behalf, we will ensure that these people are doing what is necessary to monitor and eliminate harassment of people based on gender.

We will work to a timetable to look at how we commission and procure services to see what we can do to processes and address any issues arising which might lead to the harassment and bullying of people based on gender.

Wherever possible we will avoid using stereotypes in documents, remind staff that their language and attitudes should be appropriate and encourage staff to challenge negative expressions and images which can be hurtful, or which can lead to discrimination and build barriers for people based on gender.

Staff training will be reviewed to see if there are barriers in place which stop or hinder a person based on gender.

How you will involve people in developing the scheme and in the work of the Trust?

We currently work with Staff Side colleagues on a range of key issues and our work on gender will form part of this. We will explore whether there are other groups or key individuals who can also provide information or input. This will help the Trust develop its Gender Equality Scheme and supporting action plan.

We will continue to work to specifically:

- look at what our staff tell us each year in the Staff Attitude Survey and see how we can use this information in our Action Plan;
- work out what sort of information we have that will be useful for the action plan and that will help both our staff and service users and carers.
- how we can make meetings as open as possible, look at where and when we hold meetings

As we develop our scheme and action plan we will update this section to record who we have involved, how and why. We will do this once a year as part of an annual review.

What is in your action plan?

The Action Plan will be based on the Gender Equality Scheme. We will review the action plan each year and will plan to complete the work by April 2010. Where we cannot complete the work by this date we will explain what has stopped us from doing so, and will also say what else we might be able to do instead and when. We will also say if we are not able to do some of the things which we have been asked to do and explain why we can't.

We will publish our action plan on our staff intranet site, on the Trust web page and it will be available to people applying for jobs with the Trust, members of the public, service users and carers.

What information have you got already about people based on gender and their respective needs?

We have some information about staff and about how our staff view services from:

- last year's Staff Attitude Survey
- work we did through an NHS initiative called 'Improving Working Lives'
- yearly appraisals
- our processes to manage work place difficulties
- our Occupational Health service
- the Staff Support Service
- any interviews with staff when they leave the Trust (exit interviews)
- the processes used to recruit, promote and develop staff

We will:

- look at what we do for our service users and carers, and how we provide our internal services (Procurement, Finance, Human Resources) to see how this impacts on people with disabilities.

How easy is it to use the information you get?

Some of the information we have or will collect will be easy to understand and we can make comparisons and come to clear conclusions. Other information may be where individuals or groups have given views or opinions, or described what has happened to them or where they have been unhappy with what we have done or not done. All information is important and valuable and we will have to work out how we can best use this information.

How will you use the information?

We will use the information to:

- Work out how well or not we are doing against the actions in our plan
- See whether our services and policies and procedures have any adverse effect on individuals or groups which reflect assumptions based on gender
- See if we identify any assumptions based on gender which stop us from providing a good service to people and stop us from being a good employer to our staff
- Work out if we have made any improvements over time
- Decide what we want to improve in the future and how we would measure this
- Check whether we are doing as well as other organisations

What reassurances will you give me if you want information from me?

We will be careful to explain that when we ask for, collect and use information that people who provide the information:

- do so voluntarily

- will have personal information kept confidential and it will not be shared with others unless they agree or we are required to do so by law
- will be given a reason as to why we would like the information and how we intend to use it.

As we get better at asking, collecting and understanding information, we want to find out if based on gender some people have more difficulty getting the right sort of service (either as a member of staff or as a user or carer) and be better able to find ways of changing this.

How long are you going to take to find out if what you do is based on gender assumptions which may be good or bad?

Attached to our Action Plan is a draft timetable which says how long this piece of work will take and in what order we will do the work of checking our policies and procedures and activities. We have developed a method of making this 'assessment' which has been tried and tested.

Where we have information that shows us that gender assumptions are preventing people from getting the service they should, we will set targets that we will need to meet by a given date and check regularly to see how we are doing against those targets.

Where we find that there is a negative impact or reduced opportunity for people based on gender we will work to understand what is happening and why, doing any research if needed. Once we have done this we will decide what we can do and when.

Can I see your action plan and tell you what I think needs to be in it?

Yes - you can see the action plan. It is attached to the Gender Equality Scheme, and can be found by staff on the Trust's intranet; by the general public, service users and carers on the Trust's web page. Copies are available on request from the Trust Headquarters in a variety of formats for convenience. Please complete the tear off slip at the back of this document.

Yes - what you think is important. The action plan has started off with actions that we need to take to 'get going' and actions which we can achieve in the next three years. We need you to work with us so that our actions can directly reduce the negative impact of gender and so that we can do this work in the right way and in the right order.

Our action plan will take into account:

- The results of involvement and consultation with service users and carers
- What our staff think are the priorities
- The strategic priorities of the Trust
- What we think needs to be achieved
- How we will measure whether we have done what we set out to do
- Who is responsible for making sure that we do what we say we will
- A realistic timetable for our actions.