

**POLICY & RESOURCES CABINET BOARD**

**27<sup>th</sup> August 2009**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES –  
G. JONES**

**INDEX OF REPORT ITEMS**

**PART 1 – Doc.Code: PRB-040908-REP-CE-GJ**

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1. Annual Equalities in Employment	2-34	All

## **ANNUAL EQUALITIES IN EMPLOYMENT REPORT – 2008/2009**

### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with a summary of the Authority's performance in relation to equalities issues during the 12 months ended 31st March 2009.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 Enclosed for Members' consideration is the Annual Equalities in Employment Report for 2008/2009.

### 3. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Report be **NOTED**.

### **FOR INFORMATION**

### 4. List of Background Papers

- 4.1 None

### 5. Wards Affected

- 5.1 All

### 6. Officer Contact

- 6.1 For further information, please contact Graham Jones, Head of Human Resources on 01639 763315 (e-mail [g.jones@npt.gov.uk](mailto:g.jones@npt.gov.uk)).

Or

Sheenagh Rees, Principal HR Manager on telephone:  
01639 763012 (e-mail [s.rees5@npt.gov.uk](mailto:s.rees5@npt.gov.uk) )

### 7. **Appendix 1**

- 7.1 Annual Equalities in Employment Report – 2008/2009.

**Annual Equalities in**  
**Employment Report –**  
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## *Section One*

### 1. **Workforce Profile**

The Council employs 7677 members of staff (figures based on 2008/2009 averages).

#### 1.1 **Gender Profile**

Women make up 55.1% of all NPTCBC employees, including teachers and schools-based employees. This figure is slightly higher than the proportion of economically active women in the local population (50.9%) and the proportion of women in the local population (51.7%). However, it is lower than the national average for local government, where women make up 71% of the workforce (LGE Digest – May 2009).

Across the Council, there is considerable variability in the proportion of women within each service area (see figures below). However this pattern of variability is consistent with historical trends of gender specific jobs. These demonstrate a higher proportion of women occupying the types of jobs performed within Social Services, Health & Housing compared to those in Environment Services.

#### **Gender Profile by Directorate**

Directorate	Female employees percentage
Chief Executive's	72.2%
Social Services, Health and Housing	71.6%
Finance and Corporate Services	59.9%
Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning	52.3%
Environment	30.8%
Corporate Average	55.1%

Following the implementation of job evaluation and the agreement of a new pay structure, the proportion of women at different levels within the Council was (as at April 2009) as follows:

Spinal column points	Salary range	% female as at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2009	% female previous year
Up to scp 13	Up to £15,247	47.5	51
14-34	£15524-£28270	63	60.7
35 +	£28862+	48.1	47.2
Heads of Service & above	£68439+	14.8	8

The figures above indicate changes over the past twelve months, namely that the proportion of women occupying the lowest graded posts has decreased to 47.5%, whilst the proportion of women at Head of Service and Director (senior management) level has nearly doubled. Women, who make up 55% of the workforce, remain slightly under-represented in the professional/management grades (scp 35 and above) and significantly under-represented in senior management.

### ***Full Time/Part Time by Gender***

As of 31 March 2009, 42% of the Council's workforce was employed in part time (i.e. contracted to work less than 37 hours a week) jobs. This is 0.1% lower than last year and therefore nearer to the national average for local government, where part time positions make up 39% of jobs (LGE Digest – May 2009).

The breakdown of the Council's jobs by gender and hours is set out below:

	Full Time	Part Time
Male	25.7%	4.8%
Female	32.3%	37.2%

## **1.2 Ethnic Profile**

The ethnic categories are those used in the 2001 Census. For analyses purposes the data has grouped and the term Black and minority ethnic (BME) has been used to include all ethnic groups apart from White British (including Welsh, English and Scottish).

The number of black and minority ethnic employees has increased slightly from an average figure of 45 employees (0.6%) in 2006/2007 to 67.5 employees (0.9%) in 2008/2009. This is also the case when schools- based staff are excluded from the figures, where the average figure for 2006/2007 of 39 (0.8%) has increased in 2008/2009 to 50.3 (1.1%).

The breakdown of the Council’s of black and minority ethnic employees is as follows:

**Breakdown of BME Employees by Ethnic Group**

Ethnic Group	Percentage of BME Total
Other Ethnic Group	23%
Irish	13%
Indian	9.1%
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	9.1%
Asian Other	8.1%
Mixed White & Asian	8.1%
Black British	5.1%
Black Caribbean	5.1%
Chinese	4%
Pakistani	4%
White & Asian	4%
Bangladeshi	3%
Black – African	1%
Black – Other	1%
Mixed White & Black African	1%

According to the 2001 Census, 2.4% of the local population is from a Black or minority ethnic group, as defined above. The largest groups are “Other White” (0.9%) and Irish (0.5%), followed by Indian (0.18%), White & Black Caribbean (0.16%) and Bangladeshi (0.12%) and Chinese (0.12%). In 2004, eight former communist countries, including Poland which accounts for 60% of the applicants to the UK’s Worker Registration Scheme, joined the

European Union. The effect of this on the population of Neath Port Talbot is not yet known.

The proportion of Black and minority ethnic employees ranges from 0% in Chief Executives to 0.7% in Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning, 0.8% in Environment, 0.9% in Finance & Corporate Services and 1.2% in Social Services, Health and Housing.

The distribution of Black and minority ethnic employees by grade over the past year was 1.7% for posts graded 35 and above, 0.9% for posts graded scp 14-34 and 0.7% for posts graded scp 4-13. There are no BME Directors or Heads of Service.

### 1.3 Disability Profile

In 2008/2009, 1.8 % of the workforce (135 employees) considered himself or herself to have a disability. This represents a small increase from last year's 1.6%.

Comparable figures relating to the percentage of disabled employees are available for last year (2007/08). The average figure for Welsh councils was 1.5%. A selection of the highest and lowest, together with a few neighbouring authorities, is set out below:

Rhondda Cynon Taff	3.1% (highest in Wales)
Blaenau Gwent	1.8%
Carmarthenshire	1.3%
Bridgend	1.1%
Monmouth	0.2% (lowest in Wales)

It is worth noting that there may be some under-reporting by disabled employees or prospective employees, due to fear of discrimination, or a feeling that such information is too personal/confidential. Some people, whose physical or mental impairment meets the definition of disability as set out the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, do not consider themselves to be disabled. In other cases, particularly where the disability is progressive or age-related, the impairment develops during the course of employment and there is a delay in this information reaching the employee record. It is necessary to ensure that employees feel positive about reporting their disability.

The population Census identified that, in 2001, 24.1% of people of working age in Neath Port Talbot considered themselves to have a limiting long-term illness (defined as “any long-term illness, health problem or disability, which limits daily activities or work”). This figure includes people who are permanently unfit to undertake any type of work, for example, people who receive incapacity benefit. However, the fact that Neath Port Talbot has the third highest proportion of limiting long-term illness in Wales, suggests that measures to support the employment of disabled people should be a priority.

Since the number of disabled employees within the Council is small, it is difficult to identify any strong profile patterns. However, the figures show that Finance & Corporate Services employ the largest proportion of disabled employees (4%), followed by Chief Executives (3.2%) and Social Services, Health & Housing (3%). The lowest proportion is in Environment (2.2%) and in Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning (0.6%).

Across all Council services, disabled employees currently hold 3.7% of posts graded 35 and above, 2.2% of posts graded scp 14-34 and 0.9% of posts graded scp 4-13. There are no disabled Heads of Service or Directors.

#### 1.4 Age Profile

Over 2008/2009, the average age breakdown of the Council workforce was as follows:

#### Workforce by Age Band

Age Bands	Percentage including schools	Percentage excluding schools
16-21	1.8%	2.3%
22-30	10.7%	16%
31-40	16.8%	23.5%
41-50	24.2%	33.3%
51-60	19.7%	27.5%
61-65	3.1%	4.2%
65 +	0.3%	0.4%

There is a predominance of age groups 31-40, 41-50 and 51-60, with the greatest number of employees in the age band 41-50. The Council has an ageing workforce, as 23.1% is aged over 50, whereas only 12.5% is aged between 16 and 30. Furthermore, whilst these figures remained static during the previous 2 years, 2008/2009 saw a 0.5% decrease in employees aged between 16 and 30.

The breakdown of these key age bands by Directorate is as follows:

	CEX	ELL	F&CS	SSHH	ENV
16-30	28.7%	8.2%	22.8%	14.8%	15.9%
51-65+	20.5%	15.4%	21.9%	30.2%	34.9%

Overall, the age of employees increases as the grades are more senior. The table below shows that the proportion of employees aged over 50 generally increases with grade:

#### **Proportion of Employees Aged Over 50 by Grade**

Grade	Percentage
Scp 4-13	15.6%
Scp 14-34	27.3%
Scp 35-49	33%
HoS/Director	62.5%

### **1.5 Welsh Language Profile**

As of June 2009, 7.8% of the workforce (655 postholders) had classified himself or herself as either a “fluent Welsh speaker” or a “fluent Welsh speaker and writer. This represents a 0.3% increase from the previous year.

The 2001 Census recorded the following results, as a percentage of people aged 3 and over, for Neath Port Talbot:

Speaks but does not read or write Welsh	3.26%
Speaks and reads but does not write Welsh	1.69%
Speaks, reads and writes Welsh	12.83%
Total	17.78%

Comparisons between the workforce and the Census should be considered in the following context:

- there is no reference to fluency in the Census questions, which means that the “fairly fluent” and learners might have been included in the figures above
- the Census refers to people aged 3 and over, whereas the workforce statistics refer to those aged 16 and over. Due to the popularity of Welsh Medium schools, it is reasonable to expect a higher level of fluency amongst children than in the population as a whole
- there might be some under-reporting by Welsh speaking employees or prospective employees, due to a lack of confidence that their Welsh is of an acceptable standard or a reluctance to be identified as a potential facilitator

Since the number of Welsh speakers is small, it is difficult to identify any strong profile patterns. However, the figures show that Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning employ the largest proportion of fluent Welsh speakers (11.3%), followed by Environment (4.3%), Social Services, Health & Housing (4.1%), Chief Executives (3.6%) and Finance and Corporate Services (2.4%).

For the purposes of analysis, the categories of “Fairly Fluent Speaker” and “Fairly Fluent Speaker & Writer” have been grouped together. The overall proportion of these in the Council workforce is 5.6%, which is 2.4% less than the previous year. The figures show that Chief Executives employ the largest proportion of fairly fluent Welsh speakers (7.1%), followed by Social Services, Health & Housing (6.6%). The lowest proportion is in Finance & Corporate Services (4%).

The largest proportion of Welsh Learners (13.2%) is employed in the Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning Directorate, followed by Chief Executives (12.5%), Social Services, Health and Housing (11.2%) and Finance and Corporate Services and Environment (both 6.9%). The overall proportion of employees who have classified themselves as Welsh Learners is 11.2% (938 postholders), which is 0.2% less than in 2007/2008.

A further breakdown of Welsh speakers and learners by service division and grade is available in the Council's "Welsh Language Scheme Annual Report 2008/9 and Corporate Action Plan".

*\*Note: The Welsh Language workforce data is based on "postholders" (overall total 8407), rather than the "headcount" (overall total 7677) data used throughout the remainder of this report – see paragraph 2 above for further details.*

## **1.6 Location of Welsh Speakers**

As stated in the Welsh Language Scheme, the Census showed a great variation in percentages of Welsh speakers across the county borough, ranging from 7%\* (approx.) in Taibach to 68%\* approx. in Cwmllynfell.

(\* NB these figures include people who understand spoken Welsh but have no other skills in the language)

The Scheme "offers the public the right to choose which language they use in their dealings with the Council." (Welsh Language Scheme). "To achieve this it acknowledges the need to develop a complement of strategically placed Welsh speaking employees".

For this reason, managers are issued with guidance, in which they are asked to consider whether fluency in Welsh language is a skill that essential, desirable or not a requirement, whenever they are seeking to advertise a vacancy. They are asked to consider the need in the local population to communicate in Welsh and whether they have sufficient skills in the team to meet that need.

## ***Section Two***

### **2. Employment Activity Profile**

The figures shown below refer to the period 1 April 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.

#### **2.1 *Whistle Blowing***

HR Services were not notified of any formal referrals.

## 2.2

### ***Disciplinaries***

There were a total of 113 cases requiring formal action under the Disciplinary Procedure, split by Directorate as follows:

Directorate	Number of Cases
Social Services, Health and Housing	54
Environment	34
Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning	24
Finance & Corporate Services	1
Chief Execs	0

Men were the subjects of 64% of disciplinary cases, which is disproportionate to their representation in the workforce (45%). In contrast, last year, they were the subjects of 46% of disciplinary cases requiring formal action.

There were two cases involving BME employees and no cases involving disabled employees.

The age profile of the subjects of formal action under the Disciplinary procedure is as follows:

Age Band	Number of Cases
16-21	5
22-30	13
31-40	37
41-50	28
51-60	20
61-65	1
65+	0

## 2.3 ***Grievances***

There were a total of 32 cases reported as requiring formal action under the Grievance Procedure, split by Directorate as follows:

Directorate	Number of Cases
Social Services, Health and Housing	15
Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning	6
Environment	5
Finance & Corporate Services	5
Chief Execs	1

In contrast to last year when women (who make up 55% of the workforce) lodged 25% of the grievances, in 2008/2009 women lodged 63% of all Council grievances. Neither BME nor disabled employees lodged any grievances.

The age profile of the subjects of formal action under the Grievance procedure is as follows:

Age Band	Number of Cases
16-21	0
22-30	6
31-40	10
41-50	8
51-60	10
61-65	0
65+	0

## 2.4 **Capability**

Two employees, one male, one female, were subject to formal action under the Capability Procedure.

## 2.5 **Harassment at Work**

There were a total of 16 cases reported as requiring an interview with a Support Officer, leading either to a Stage 1 meeting (i.e. Option A, B or C of the procedure) or a decision to take no action but keep a written record of events for future use. The cases involved complainants from the following directorates:

Directorate	Number of Complainants
Environment	6
Social Services, Health and Housing	4
Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning	4
Chief Executives	2

The complainants chose the following options:

Stage 1 Options	Number of Complainants
Option A, i.e. speak directly to alleged harasser	7
Option B, i.e. communicate via supervisor/manager	4
Option C, i.e. communicate via TU rep/colleague	0
Option D, i.e. take no action but keep a written record of events for future use.	5

Last year there were 7 cases, only one of which involved a Stage 1 meeting with the alleged perpetrator, Option D being the most popular response. The greater use of Options A and B in 2008/2009 is encouraging, as it implies that employees who felt they were being harassed or bullied chose to address the situation.

69% of the complainants were female, compared to 71% last year. None of the complainants were recorded as being from a BME community or having a disability, but Support Officers do not usually ask complainants for this information. The age profile of complainants was as follows:

	22-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
Number of complaints	5	2	7	2

The nature of the alleged cases of discrimination or bullying was as follows:

	Sexual	Racial	Disability	Sexuality	Religion /Belief	Age	Bullying	Other
Number of complaints	0	0	0	1	0	0	14	1

There was one Stage 2 formal investigation in 2008/2009.

## 2.6 **Sickness**

### *Sickness Rates*

The Council's average sickness rate in 2008/2009 was 11.8 days per person. At 12.4 days, females averaged higher sickness rates than males (10.7). Sickness rates between directorates varied significantly depending on the nature of the work, e.g. frontline or backroom and/or involving manual handling. There are large groups of traditionally male, e.g. refuse and building trades, and female, e.g. residential and home care, workers represented in the following sickness rates by gender:

Directorate	FTE Days Lost - Females	FTE Days Lost - Males
Social Services, Health and Housing	17.8	13.7
Environment	13.5	12.6
Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning	10.2	7
Finance & Corporate Services	9.2	6.4
Chief Execs	7.8	8.6

At 19.7 days, employees who have reported that they have a disability had a higher overall rate of sickness absence in 2008/2009 than the corporate average (11.8).

The overall sickness rate for BME employees (8.4) was lower than the corporate average.

In 2008/2009, employees' average rates of sickness increased, almost without exception\*, with age, as follows:

Age range	16-21	22-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-65	65
FTE Days Lost	5.2	7.8	10.3	10.4	15.8	22	12.6

*\* Note: the plateau between ages 31 and 50 and a marked reduction in sickness after age 65*

### *Formal Sickness Interviews*

There were a total of 603 formal sickness interviews between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2009, split by Directorate as follows:

Directorate	Number of Cases
Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning	44
Social Services, Health and Housing	341
Finance & Corporate Services	19
Chief Execs	0
Environment	199

Women make up 55% of the workforce, but were the subject of 61% of the interviews. This disparity may be due to the higher rate of sickness amongst females. Where levels of individual sickness absence cause concern, they are classified as either “short term” or “long term” under the Council’s Sickness Absence Management Policy. Women represented 47% of employees who reached the Policy’s short term trigger points during 2008/09. The majority of sickness management interviews relate to long term absence.

No BME employees received an interview, perhaps reflecting their lower than average sickness rate. Disabled people make up 1.8% of the workforce and were the subject of 0.5% of the interviews.

The age profile of the subjects of formal sickness interviews is as follows:

Age Band	Number of Cases
16-21	10
22-30	62
31-40	130
41-50	190
51-60	190
61-65	13
65+	1

## 2.7 Recruitment

### *Internal Promotions*

The Council does not operate a promotions scheme. All posts are filled through competitive recruitment. However, employees wishing to take different posts can apply for advertised vacancies across the Council. There is prior consideration for employees who are red-circled, under notice of redundancy or dismissal on health grounds. A breakdown of equality data on internal appointments is not yet available.

### *Recruitment Monitoring*

The recruitment monitoring figures are based on 8384 applications submitted (and 217 appointments) to the Council over the last year, across all directorates. They show the following recruitment trends:

	Percentage of all applicants	Percentage of applicants on shortlist	Percentage of applicants appointed
Female	56.6%	68.5%	56%
BME	2.2%	2.3%	1.8%
Disabled	3%	4%	1.8%
Age 16-21	15%	11.8%	10.3%
Age 22-30	33.3%	27.2%	27.9%
Age 31-40	19.5%	23.4%	22.7%
Age 41-50	18.3%	23.9%	20.7%
Age 51-60	9.4%	10.8%	10.3%
Age 61-65	0.6%	0.8%	2.6%
Age 65+	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%

The above indicates that, with the possible exception of 61-21 year olds, the corporate application rates do not differ significantly from the appointment rates.

During 2008/2009, recruitment work gradually transferred from directorate teams to a dedicated recruitment team. This has led to some disruption in the record keeping, which makes further analysis of the figures inappropriate.

## 2.8 Leavers

The following chart shows employees by equality and age categories as percentages of all leavers (from permanent posts) during 2008/09:

	Female	BME	Disabled	16-21	22-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-65	65+
%	70	0.7	5.1	1.5	13.8	19.2	23.9	25.7	14.5	1.5

Women represent 70% of leavers, which is disproportionate to their representation (55%) in the workplace. 5.1% is also slightly disproportionate to the representation of disabled people (1.8%) in the workplace.

## Section Three

### 3. What have we done over the last year?

#### 3.1 Equal Pay Review

The Council has been committed, under the terms of a national agreement for Local Government Services, to completing job evaluation and an equal pay review.

The project commenced four years ago, and work is still ongoing, due to the unprecedented complexity, scale and cost of the task. However, during 2008/2009 the major milestone of agreeing and implementing an equality-proofed new pay structure and terms and conditions was achieved.

Further details are set out below.

- (a) **Equal Pay** – The Council had previously made equal pay compensation claims to over 2300 employees by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007. During March 2009, the Council made further equal pay compensation payments to 1803 employees.
- (b) **Job Evaluation (JE)** – Ongoing job evaluation became operational, thus ensuring that all new or changed posts are job evaluated, as they arise.
- (c) **JE Appeals** – Procedural arrangements for informal conciliatory meetings and formal JE Appeal hearings were agreed with the trade unions and implementation commenced.
- (d) **New Pay Structure** – Management and local and regional trade union representatives agreed a new equality-proofed pay structure, based on the JE scores which have created for some 1,200 different posts occupied by around 7,000 employees. An equality impact assessment of the pay structure was undertaken by an independent equality expert, and changes were made where necessary to ensure it was equality-proofed. The new pay and conditions were then approved by unions at national level, before being endorsed by trade union members in ballots of the workforce.
- (e) **Conditions of Service** – A revised conditions of service package, also designed to ensure equal pay, was developed and agreed as part of the ballot referred to above.
- (f) **Market Pay Scheme** – A market pay scheme was negotiated to enable market pay supplements to be payable in limited specific circumstances, subject to a rigorous review of the relevant “pay market” and sound evidence also being available.
- (g) **Pay Protection and Employee Support Programme** – An Employee Support Programme (ESP) was developed to support those employees who are adversely affected by the new Pay and Conditions package. The ESP, amongst other measures, makes provision for Pay Protection to be provided on a “frozen pay” basis.
- (h) **Workforce Communications** – A joint officer/trade union working group developed a communication strategy to communicate a complex package of pay and conditions changes to some 7,000 employees, but will also to seek to ensure that the subsequent ballot of TU members resulted in a “yes” vote. The “yes” vote was finally achieved in December 2008/January 2009.

- (i) **Implementation of New structure** – The agreement committed the Council to implementing the new structure by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009. Between the last ballot in January 2009 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009, approximately 7000 employees were successfully transferred to the new structure.

### 3.2 **Gender Equality Scheme**

The Equality Act 2006 amended the Sex Discrimination Act to place a statutory duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their function, to have due regard to the need:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- To promote equality of opportunity between men and women

This is known as the ‘general duty’ and came into effect on 6th April 2007.

To support progress in delivering the general duty, the Council prepared and published a gender equality scheme, effective from 30 April 2007 for a period of three years, showing how it will meet its general and specific duties and setting out its gender equality objectives. This followed consultation with the trade unions on the Council’s employment gender equality priorities.

The Scheme includes an action plan covering all employment issues related to gender. The objective of establishing “a fairer and more transparent system of pay based on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, free of all forms of discrimination and bias” has dominated the work of both the management and trade union sides for the past four years.

### 3.3 **Women in Senior Management**

Given the Council’s low percentage of women in senior management (14.8%) and the impact this might have on decision-making, a Women in Leadership Group was set up in February 2009. Reporting to the Council’s Heads of Service Group, it meets bi-monthly to work towards the following objectives:

- To identify and remove barriers to women's succession into senior management and to strengthen their current roles.

- To develop a professional support network which explore the following issues:
  - What do women experience on a day to day basis?
  - How does this inhibit progress?
  - What formal local authority supports are available to signpost women onto?
- To formally support women to pursue local authority options for training, development and progression (succession management).
- To explore external links with relevant organisations and individuals.

### 3.4 **Disability Equality Scheme**

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 introduced the Disability Equality Duty, which aims to get public authorities to think and act proactively on disability equality issues. The Council published its Disability Equality Scheme on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2006, setting out how it would:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and others
- Eliminate discrimination and harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- Take steps to take account of disabled people's disability, even where that involves treating disabled people more forwardly.

The Scheme is implemented via an action plan, which includes employment issues related to disability. Progress is reported annually and the Scheme will be reviewed every three years.

The Scheme commits the Council to taking a proactive approach to recruiting and employing disabled people, together with reviewing HR procedures in relation to disability equality. These are being addressed via the Impact Assessment Process (see paragraph 3.9 below) and the work of the Forum, which recommends changes to employment practices.

### **3.5 Disabled Employees Forum**

The Disabled Employees Forum was established in June 2007, with the overall aim of ensuring that NPTCBC is an exemplary council in disability matters, evidenced by:

- An increase in the percentage of Council employees who have a disability (currently 1.8% of the workforce)
- Improved recruitment and retention of disabled employees
- Improved, or better communicated, employment policies, which are disability aware.

During 2008/2009, the Forum undertook the following work:

- Approval of a short course, undertaken in June/July 2008 as part of a research project, for employees who suffer from a chronic health problem;
- Recommendations for changes to the Council's Sickness Management Policy.

The Forum's progress was hampered by the unavailability of its chair, resulting in its meeting on just three occasions, and a need to develop a mechanism for providing a formal response to Forum recommendations. Meetings were therefore suspended pending a review of the process for feeding the views of the Forum into the Council's decision-making machinery.

### **3.6 Recruitment and Retention of Disabled Employees**

During 2008/2009, 35 employees with disabilities received support through Job Centre Plus Schemes such as Access to Work and Workstep.

### **3.7 Harassment at Work Support**

The Harassment at Work Policy has been operational for non-schools based employees since 2000. It involves the employment of up to 12 Harassment Support Officers, drawn from the existing workforce, to assist employees

facing harassment or bullying at work. Support Officers meet on a quarterly basis as a group to share experiences, in confidence, and offer on-going support to one another. They also receive refresher training sessions. Regular meetings have taken place throughout 2008/2009 and a refresher course for Support Officers was held on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2008. The Strategic HR Unit has continued to provide Support Officers with a source of ongoing advice.

One of the Support Officers ran a Bullying and Harassment Awareness course for a team in Housing Options. It was well received and may provide a pilot for future training courses.

During 2008/2009, the ELLL directorate updated its harassment at work policy covering schools based staff and provided training for all primary and secondary headteachers.

### **3.8 Childcare Vouchers**

Following a successful tendering exercise, Kiddivouchers was appointed to administer a childcare voucher scheme on behalf of the Council with effect from 2 January 2008 for an initial period of three years.

Childcare vouchers are a method of paying for registered childcare, under which the employee gives up or “sacrifices” part of his/her pay in exchange for Childcare Vouchers. The vouchers are non-taxable and exempt from National Insurance (N.I.) contributions, saving each parent up to £55 per week. The introduction of this benefit makes childcare more affordable and provides support to working parents.

Kiddivouchers assist in publicising the scheme and advise and guide employees through the eligibility criteria and application process.

Participation in the Scheme has gradually risen from 39 employees in the first month to 78 employees in March 2009, with a total monthly voucher value of £16,244.

### **3.9 Equality Impact Assessments**

Under race, disability and gender legislation, the Council has a duty to undertake impact assessments on all its current and future functions and related policies and procedures.

The most significant employment-related equality impact assessment undertaken in 2008/2009 was in relation to the new pay structure (see paragraph 3.1 (d) above) and covered gender, ethnicity and disability. It concluded that the new “grading and pay structure proposals result in the narrowing of current significant gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps to less than the 5% significance level, meaning that they represent a real move towards equal pay for equal work”.

### **3.10 Work Life Balance – NPT Workstyle**

The NPT Workstyle portal is used for processing applications for 5 work styles, as follows:

- Flexible Office (default)
- Mobile
- Home Based (= 3+ days at home a week)
- Occasional Home User (= 1-2 days a week at home)
- Fixed Desk

The portal was initially used for all employees who were relocated to the Quays, in Briton Ferry. During 2008/2009, it was made available to other employees, as other major relocations were carried out, especially in the Social Services, Health & Housing directorate. With its streamlined application process, it has the potential to substantially expand the amount of flexible working undertaken across the county borough.

### **3.11 Welsh Language Scheme**

The Council’s Welsh Language Scheme was approved by the Welsh Language Board (WLB) on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2007. It amended and replaced the original Scheme which was approved in 1997.

Work during 2008/2009 included improvements to the analysis of employee Welsh Language data and Welsh speaker and learners’ events in the workplace (see paragraph 3.13 below).

### **3.12 Welsh Language Courses**

During 2008/2009, the Council introduced an additional year (Year 5) for Welsh Language courses, as set out below, for its employees. In return for a commitment to attend all sessions, the employee receives paid leave of up to 60 hours per year for course attendance.

For the academic year 2008/2009, the numbers of employees, by directorate, committed to attend the Council's language courses has been as follows:

	CEX	ELLL	ENV	F&CS	SSHH	Totals
Year 1	4	-	12	2	2	20
Year 2	-	3	3	-	8	14
Year 3	1	1	5	1	1	9
Year 4	-	4	1	-	6	11
Year 5	-	-	-	-	3	3
Totals	5	8	21	3	20	57

### 3.13 Welsh Speakers and Learners

An internal promotion of the Council's Welsh Language Scheme was undertaken during week commencing 19<sup>th</sup> January 2009. Several promotions and activities, including daily competitions, took place during 'Welsh Week' to encourage employees to think about Welsh and the requirements of the Scheme as part of their everyday work. Employees were able to visit display stands promoting the Welsh Language Scheme, located in the 3 main Council Offices - Neath Civic Centre, the Quays and Port Talbot Civic Centre.

The 'Welsh Week' ended with a 'drop in' event, which was aimed mainly at employees who are Welsh speakers and learners, but was also open to anyone who wanted more information. One of the main objectives of the event was to create a network of speakers and learners within the Authority. There was a positive response, with over 50 employees signing up to the network on the day and others signing up since the event. It is an informal network, which aims to give employees the opportunity to practice Welsh and to build confidence, thus supporting the use of Welsh in the work place.

One group of network members, who are based in the same building, has started to meet on a monthly basis during lunchtime to practice Welsh. Other members have also expressed an interest in holding similar meeting in their buildings in the future.

### 3.14 Positive Action Initiative - *Housing Maintenance Officer*

The role of Housing Maintenance Officer, which is unique to local government, has tended to attract only people with experience in the building trades. Even then, the role can prove a big step away from being a building operative or supervisor.

For this reason, such vacancies have proved both difficult to fill and attracted only male candidates.

Housing Maintenance decided to address this by providing on-the-job training opportunities of up to 6 months, to equip a small number of Council employees with the appropriate skills, experience and training to be able to successfully apply for HMO vacancies. The advertisement for the training opportunities included a positive action statement encouraging women to apply. As a result of this initiative, the Council has recruited its first female HMO.

### 3.15 Workways

Workways is a Council-supported project which aims to help people into long term employment through training and paid work experience. The Council has acted as host provider for a number of Workways trainees. The trainees are employed for up to 30 hours a week, for a maximum of one year, in return for which they receive the National Minimum (hourly) Wage, together with the training and experience necessary to seek more sustainable employment.

During 2008/2009, the Council hosted 77 Workways trainees. The breakdown by directorate was as follows:

Directorate	Number of Trainees	Percentage of Total
Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning	32	42%
Environment	20	26%
Social Services, Health and Housing	17	22%
Finance and Corporate	6	8%

Services		
Chief Executive's	2	3%

In contrast to the previous two years in which the majority of trainees were male, the gender balance in 2008/2009 was almost 50:50. The results of the equalities monitoring forms indicated that 23% of trainees considered him/herself to have a disability, two were from a minority ethnic group and two were Welsh-speaking. Thirteen chose to work less than 30 hours a week.

The age profile was as follows:

Age Bands	16-21	22-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-65	65+
Percentages	16%	35%	21%	21%	8%	0%	0%

## *Section Four*

### 4. **What are we going to do in 2009/2010?**

The following list is a summary of the new initiatives and major tasks the Council anticipates undertaking during 2009/2010. The additional work created by the Equal Pay Review during the previous year means that some tasks have been carried over from 2008/2009, as indicated by a footnote to that effect. Ongoing tasks, such as the provision of Welsh Language courses for employees, have been excluded from the list, but will appear in the end of year report.

The Council supports a number of equalities working groups and forums (see Appendix 1 for a full list), which have a role in advising the Council on how to make its services and job opportunities more accessible to all communities. This means that priorities may change, as the year progresses.

Overall equality priorities are determined by the Council's Heads of Service Equalities Group, which meets on a quarterly basis.

#### 4.1 **Equal Pay Review**

The new pay structure and harmonised conditions of service were formally agreed with trade unions in January 2009. Other related tasks such as resolving job evaluation and equal pay appeals and running the employee support scheme for red-circled employees will continue to dominate the work of HR services during 2009/2010. The agreement includes a commitment to monitor the new structure and conditions to ensure that it continues “to offer fair and equal pay to all employees.” It will therefore be necessary to establish, and start to implement, joint monitoring arrangements during this period.

The Council intends to set up a Joint Equalities Group, to meet 6 months and 12 months after the implementation and annually thereafter. The Group will monitor the following activities:

Recruitment/Appointments;  
Training opportunities offered;  
Pay & Grading structure;  
Operation of market supplements, acting-up and honoraria payments;  
Outcome of restructuring exercises;  
Any other issues deemed appropriate.

#### 4.3 **Carers Policy\***

The Council recognises that caring is a growing responsibility affecting its current, and potential, workforce. According to the 2001 Census, Neath Port Talbot has the highest percentage of carers per population throughout the whole of the UK. The Council will investigate additional ways of supporting employees with caring responsibilities, including ensuring that they are made aware of the full range of support options available.

*\*Task rescheduled from 2008/2009 to 2009/2010.*

#### 4.4 **Domestic Abuse Strategy\***

The Council recognises that the many of its employees, especially women, are likely to experience domestic abuse. It will investigate ways of supporting employees who experience domestic abuse, including ensuring that they are made aware of the full range of support options available.

*\*Task rescheduled from 2008/2009 to 2009/2010.*

#### **4.5 Equality Training Initiatives**

The Council plans to consolidate all directorate training and development posts into one Learning, Training and Development Team, which will be tasked with the provision of equalities training during 2009/2010. This should provide both consistency and improved opportunities for equalities training across all directorates.

#### **4.6 Harassment at Work**

As in the previous year, the Council's monitoring figures for 2008/2009 show that the majority of allegations of bullying and harassment relate to bullying (88%). This is typical of findings in other organisations, as evidenced in the CIPD's research report entitled "Working Life: Employee Attitudes and Engagement 2006" which found that bullying allegations represented 77% of reported cases. As bullying has extremely negative repercussions for both the employee and the employer, a top priority for all managers has to be the eradication of all forms of bullying and harassment from the workplace. The Council is therefore considering whether to develop, in the future, a corporate course to improve the knowledge and skills of line managers in dealing with bullying and harassment in the workplace.

#### **4.7 Welsh Language Scheme**

The Council's Welsh Language Scheme was approved by the Welsh Language Board (WLB) on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2007 and a corporate action plan is agreed annually.

Work for 2008/2009 will focus on monitoring and ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of frontline posts that are both designated as Welsh Essential and filled by Welsh speakers; promoting and developing the new network of employees who are Welsh speakers or learners; and ensuring that all equalities training meets the requirements of the Welsh Language Act.

#### **4.8 Equality Impact Assessments**

In 2009/2010, further equality impact assessments, intended to equality-proof the Council's policies and procedures and to identify any necessary

improvements, will be undertaken as employment policies develop and change.

#### **4.9 The Equality Improvement Framework for Wales - Pilot**

The EIF has been developed by the WLGA to promote, manage and improve equality within local government. The framework is intended to establish the basis for mainstreaming - that is, making equality a guiding principle in local governance – and lead to continuous improvement in equality in services, policy and employment. The EIF offers a common approach for dealing with equality for race, the Welsh language, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and belief and age.

Following a successful bid by the Council to be a pilot authority to support the implementation of EIF, the Council is committed to working in partnership with the WLGA on the production of a set of equality values and a vision statement, as a precursor to the future development of an NPTCBC single equality scheme. In recognition of a need to engage Council decision-makers, this work will commence with an event (scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009), involving WLGA trainers, in which Corporate Management Group will debate an initial set of equality values and a mission statement.

#### **4.10 The Equality Bill**

The Equality Bill had its second reading in May 2009 and is due for implementation in October 2010. If it becomes statute, it will require a review of existing policies and procedures to incorporate new definitions of discrimination, liability for third party harassment, positive action and procurement; and introduce requirements for a single equality scheme and the publication of information (annually) regarding any gender pay gap.

The Council will monitor developments regarding the Bill and commence preparatory work, as necessary.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Equalities Working Groups and Forums at NPTCBC**

#### **Heads of Service Equalities Group**

This Group meets on a quarterly basis to keep under review external equality-related developments, approve corporate equality documents, monitor progress on the implementation of corporate equality policies and action plans and share and develop expertise and experience. It receives minutes from specialist equalities working groups such as DPAG. Its members take a lead in their respective directorates in equality issues and commission corporate equalities training.

#### **Welsh Language Officers Group**

This Group develops, and monitors the implementation of, the Council's Welsh Language Scheme. The Group comprises directorate representatives and a representative from Menter Iaith. Good practice is developed or shared.

#### **Neath Port Talbot BME Forum**

The BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) Forum was established in 2005 to better understand Neath Port Talbot's BME communities and aspirations. The forum meets three times a year and focuses on issues raised by the BME representatives.

#### **Neath Port Talbot Older Persons Council**

Neath Port Talbot's Older Persons Council was established in July 2005, in order to give older people an opportunity to have a formal say about issues that affect their daily lives.

#### **Neath Port Talbot Youth Council**

NPT Youth Council is a project designed to empower young people to have their voices heard. It continues to visit young people all over the county borough, in order to set up youth forums in as many areas as possible. In addition to bringing youth issues to the attention of politicians, it offers valuable opportunities for personal development to young people involved, which can improve their employment prospects.

### **Disabled Persons Advisory Group (DPAG)**

This Group comprises representatives from each directorate, the Disability Forum, the CVS and Shaw Trust. It provides an opportunity to raise and address any barriers encountered in addressing Council services or employment. It considers future disability initiatives/events and is currently developing a revised Disability Strategy.

### **Harassment Support Officers Group**

Support Officers meet on a quarterly basis to share experiences in confidence, offer on-going support to one another and receive training. They also contribute to the on-going development of the Harassment at Work Policy and Procedure.

### **Disabled Employees Forum**

Formed in June 2007, this is the Council's only employee-orientated forum. The overall aim of the Forum is to ensure that NPTCBC is an exemplary council in disability matters, as outlined in paragraph 3.5 above.

### **Women in Leadership Group**

Formed in February 2009, the Group aims to identify and remove barriers to women's succession into senior management; to develop a professional support network; to formally support women to pursue local authority options for training, development and progression; and to explore external links with relevant organisations and individuals, as outlined in paragraph 3.3 above.