

# GENDER EQUALITY STATEMENT & ACTION PLAN



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## WELCOME FROM THE GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Welcome to North Star Housing Group's first Gender Equality Plan.

The Equality Act 2006 placed a duty on us to produce a Gender Equality Plan. This Plan covers our approach to gender equality and establishes our future priorities within the plan.

We are fully committed to eliminating gender inequality and promoting equality between men and women, girls and boys and to providing the best possible services for everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, age or socio-economic status.

We recognise that gender issues cut across all the different equality strands and that a '*one-size fits all*' approach is not the answer. We believe this Plan will have a positive impact on people's lives.

This plan outlines our approach to addressing gender equality issues and sets out our overall vision for gender equality together with the objectives and priorities that will help us turn our vision into reality. We will produce a progress report annually. During its final year we will carry out a comprehensive review to assess how well we have complied with the General Duty to promote gender equality.

Our annual review will allow us to update the Plan to reflect new areas of work and issues raised from further consultation.



Angela Lockwood  
**Acting Group Chief  
Executive**

## WHY DO WE NEED A GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

The Equality Act 2006 places a duty on all public organisations, to comply with the Gender Equality Duty. The new Gender Equality Duty, which stems from the Equality Act, places a duty on all public authorities to promote gender equality.

We are committed to providing the best possible services for everyone. This Plan outlines our approach to ensure that the needs of all people are anticipated and met regardless of their gender, as part of our approach to excellent customer service. This document sets out our overall vision for gender equality together with the objectives and priorities that will help us turn our vision into reality. It describes the key actions we will take and the close partnership working we will develop to improve outcomes for men and women within the areas we cover.

## THE GENDER EQUALITY CONTEXT

### The Equality Act 2006

The Equality Act 2006 places a duty on public organisations, to comply with the Gender Equality Duty. We believe that this duty gives us the opportunity to bring together and prioritise issues important for men and women, girls and boys. The Equality Act 2006 also establishes the Commission for Equality and Human Rights. This unified equality body is an amalgamation of:

- Equal Opportunities Commission
- Disability Rights Commission,
- Commission for Racial Equality

The new organisation was set up in October 2007 and the existing commissions will be phased out by March 2009.

### The Gender Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2006 amends the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Equal Pay Act 1970. The new Gender Equality Duty, which stems from the Equality Act, places a duty on all public authorities to promote gender equality. This is the biggest change in sex equality legislation for 30 years.

#### The Gender Equality Duty

This duty has two aspects which public authorities need to meet.

1. A General Duty  
This is achieved by having due regard to the need to:
  - eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment this includes the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment in employment and vocational training for staff including those that intend to undergo, are undergoing or have had gender reassignment
  - promote equality of opportunity between men and women.
2. Specific Duties  
These are required as a means to the meet the general duty.

- To prepare and publish a gender equality scheme, showing how it will meet its general and specific duties, and setting out its gender equality objectives.
- In formulating its overall objectives, to consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap.
- To gather and use information on how its policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services.
- To consult stakeholders (that is, employees, service users and others, including trade unions) and take account of relevant information in order to determine its gender equality objectives.
- To assess the impact of its current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality.
- To implement the actions set out in its gender equality scheme within three years, unless it is unreasonable or impracticable to do so.
- To report against the scheme every year and review the scheme at least every three years.

The aim of the Gender Equality Duty is to deliver real change and practical improvements in the lives of both men and women. It is concerned with outcomes rather than processes. It places more responsibility with service providers to act strategically about gender equality, rather than leaving it to individuals to challenge poor practice.

The Gender Equality Duty recognises that women are frequently disadvantaged by policies and practices that do not recognise their greater caring responsibilities, the different pattern of their working lives, their more limited access to resources and their greater vulnerability to domestic violence and sexual assault.

Men are also disadvantaged by workplace cultures that do not support their family or childcare responsibilities, by family services that assume they have little or no role in parenting, or by health services which do not recognise their needs.

Both sexes suffer from stereotyping of their roles and needs. The duty should help the public sector, and those working with it, to identify and respond to stereotyping, sex discrimination and sexism, resulting in improvements for all.

Policies and practices that seem neutral can have a significantly different effect on women and on men, often contributing to greater gender inequality and poor policy outcomes. Individual legal rights have not been enough by themselves to change this.

It affects all public bodies – from local councils to government departments, from schools to colleges.

### What it means in practice

The Gender Duty places a responsibility on all public bodies to “ensure that their policies and practices as employers, services deliverers and other functions including policy making and regulatory and enforcement activities address the different needs of men and women”. In practice it will mean that public bodies will need to look at all their services and find out:

- What the priority issues are for men and women in the services provided.
- Whether men and women have different needs within those services.
- Whether one gender might be put off using those services because of the way in which they are delivered.

- Whether there are some services that are more effectively delivered as women-only or men-only.

We will also need to:

- Look at our employment policies and practices to consider the needs of all our employees, including those who identify as transgender or transsexual to ensure that those policies and practices address their different needs.
- Recognise the needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) employees.

### How is the Gender Equality Duty different?

The Gender Equality Duty is different from previous sex equality legislation in two crucial ways:

- Public authorities have to be proactive in eliminating discrimination and harassment, rather than waiting for individuals to take cases against them.
- Public authorities have to be proactive in promoting equality of opportunity, and not just avoiding discrimination.

## UNDERSTANDING OUR CURRENT POSITION

### Gender

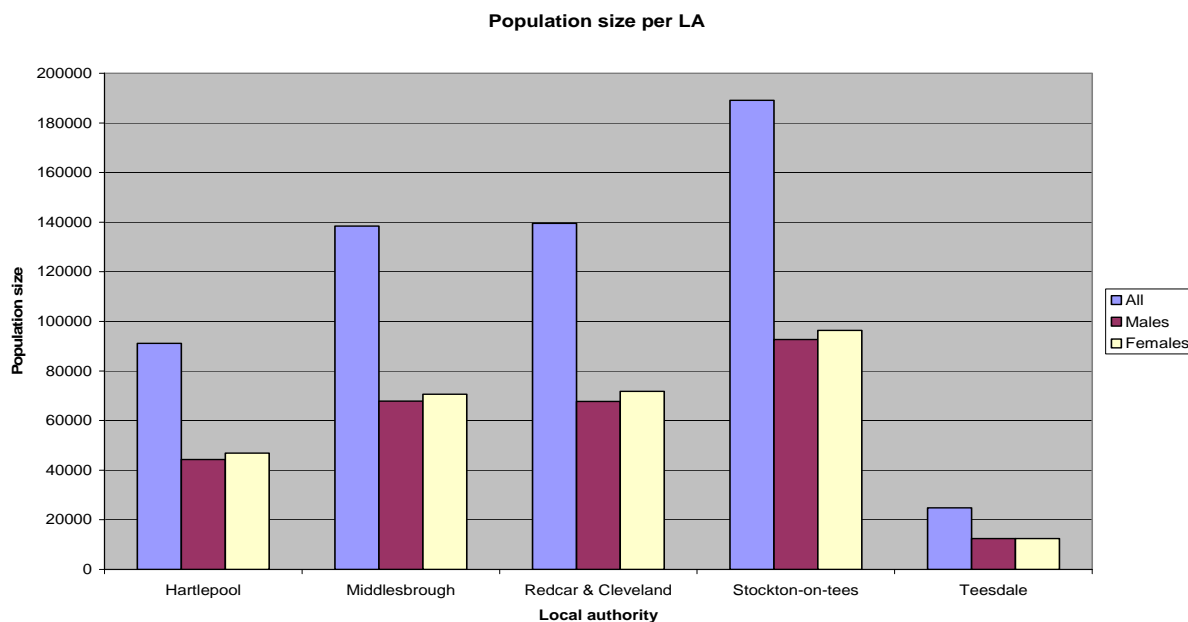
In 2006 each of our LA area statistics show women make up just over half the total population in that area, with only Teesdale having an even split. While men make up an average of 65% of those of working-age; however these numbers are for those aged 16 and over to 59 for women, 64 for men.

Teesdale Housing Association workforce is made up an equal amount of men and women, a direct reflection of the Teesdale area. Endeavour Housing Association has 81.7% female staff while North Star Housing Group has 61.5% male staff. The Group as a whole has 65.1% female staff. On the North Star Board there are 3 female members and 5 males members.

Between October 2006 and September 2007 out those who are of working age men were consistently more likely to be economically active than women. This was the case across all the LAs. Men were also had greater gross weekly pay and a higher hourly rate than women in all the areas (This data was unavailable for Teesdale).

### Population Size within each Local Authority

	<u>Hartlepool</u>	<u>Middlesbrough</u>	<u>Redcar &amp; Cleveland</u>	<u>Stockton</u>	<u>Teesdale</u>
All	91100	138400	139500	189100	24800
Males	44300	67800	67700	92700	12400
Females	46900	70600	71800	96400	12400



## Age

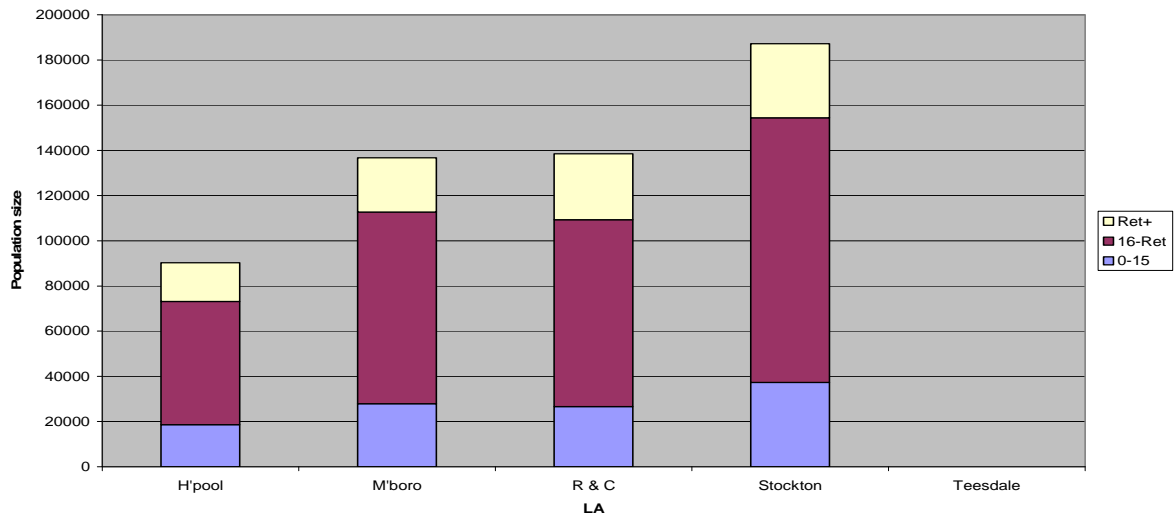
In the 2006 Tenant Satisfaction Survey Endeavour HA found that over a fifth of tenants are aged 65 or over (22.7%). 56.8% of tenants are aged 35 to 64 and only 20.5% of respondents were aged 16 to 34, with very few being aged under 25. A quarter (25.5%) of households contain at least one member aged 16 or under whereas a third of households (34.3%) contain at least one member who is over 60 years of age.

The 2007 Tenant Status Survey Teesdale HA found that 48.9% of tenants were aged 65 or over with 12.0% aged between 16 and 34 years old. 27.5% of the tenants' partner/spouse were aged 65 or over and 12.9% of tenants' partner/spouse were aged 16 to 34. Over half of households contained at least one adult aged 60 or over (51.9%), followed by households containing one adult under the age of 60 (16.6%). The next most common household type was those with two adults, both under 60 (9.7%). Households containing children with one parent accounted for 7.9% of all households and those with two parents accounted for 8.1%.

### The population size per age range in each local authority

	0-15 years old		16-Retirement		Retirement +	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Hartlepool	18580	21.0	54555	60.0	17150	19.0
Middlesbrough	27930	20.4	84780	62.0	24025	17.6
Redcar & Cleveland	26645	19.2	82650	59.7	29210	21.1
Stockton-on-tees	37300	19.9	117080	62.5	32835	17.5

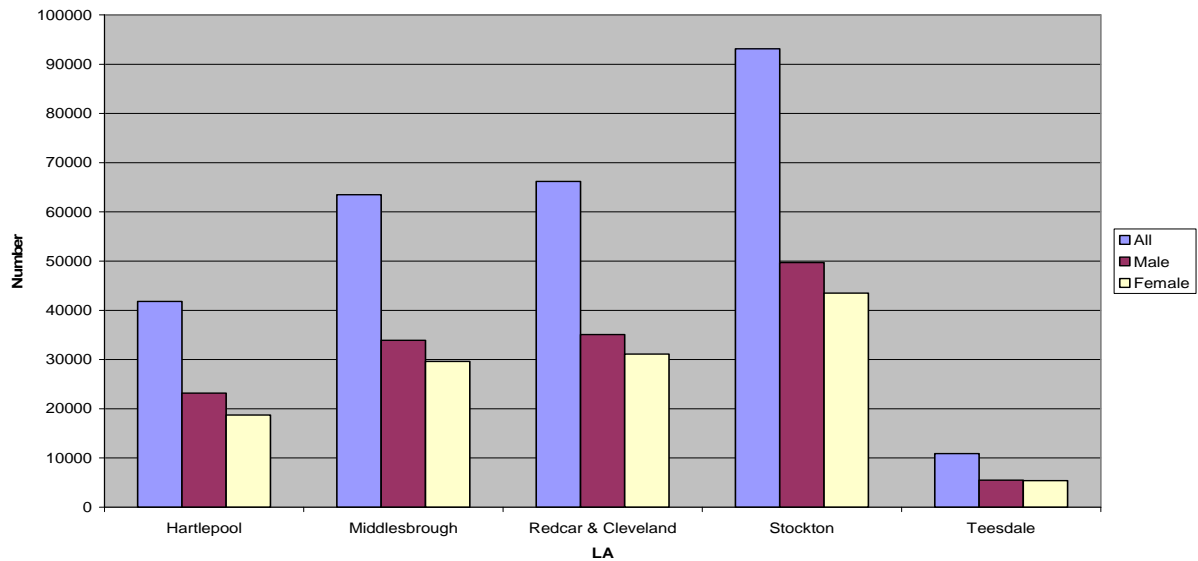
Population size per age range



The number of economically active (Oct 2006 - Sep 2007) for those of working age

	Hartlepool		Middlesbrough		Redcar & Cleveland		Stockton		Teesdale	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
All	41800	73.5	63500	72	66200	76	93100	77.3	10900	70.2
Male	23200	80.4	33900	74.6	35100	73	49700	81.7	5500	73.7
Female	18700	66.2	29600	69.2	31100	72.6	43500	72.7	5400	66.9

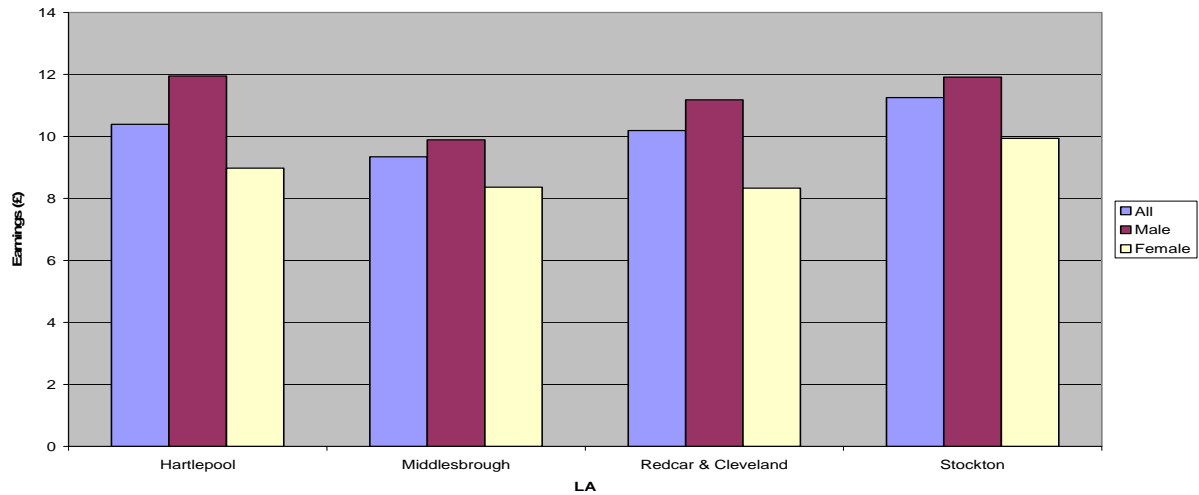
Economically active per LA



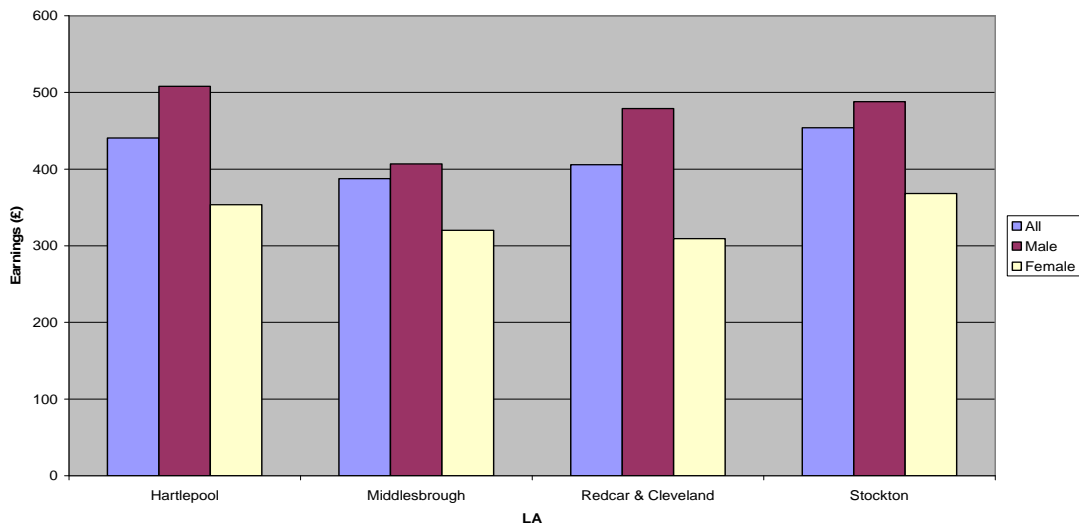
## Full-time Workers Earnings by residence (2007) (£)

	Hartlepool		Middlesbrough		Redcar & Cleveland		Stockton	
	Weekly	Hourly	Weekly	Hourly	Weekly	Hourly	Weekly	Hourly
All	440.6	10.39	387.6	9.34	405.6	10.19	453.9	11.25
Male	508	11.95	406.7	9.89	478.9	11.18	487.9	11.91
Female	353.5	8.98	320.2	8.36	309.3	8.33	368.2	9.94

Full-time workers hourly earnings by residence (2007)

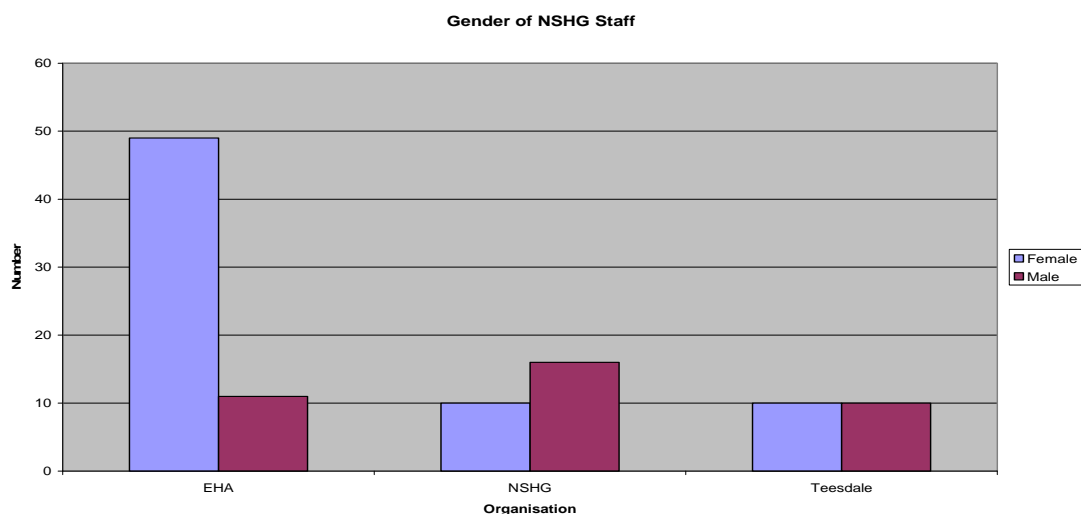


Full-time workers weekly earnings by residence (2007)



## The Gender distribution of North Star Housing Group Staff

	Endeavour HA	North Star HG	Teesdale HA
Female	49	10	10
Male	11	16	10



## Sexual Orientation

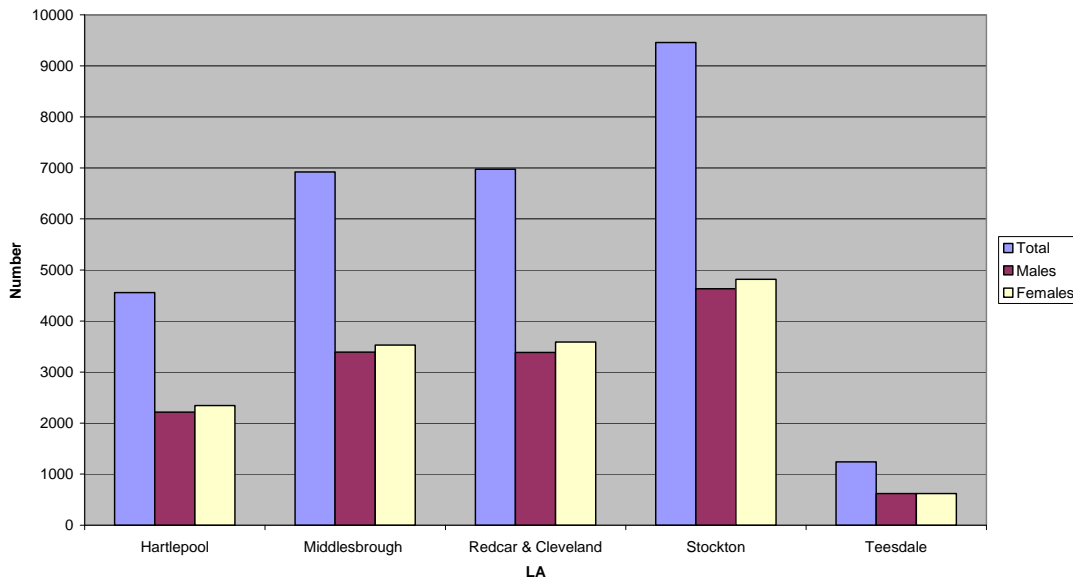
It is unlikely that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) will be including a question on sexual orientation in the 2011 Census and is not aware of any other country doing so. Issues such as what is actually measured, i.e. behaviour, desire or identity and the collection of the date i.e. what is acceptable and/or understandable makes it difficult to ensure quality and accurate responses.

The Government currently uses the figure of 5-7% as a reasonable estimation of population size but there is still no hard data of these numbers. The attached data sheets show how this would correspond to each of the local authorities.

### Lesbian Gay & Bisexual population estimates based on government estimates in 2004

	Hartlepool		Middlesbrough		Redcar & Cleveland		Stockton		Teesdale	
	5%	7%	5%	7%	5%	7%	5%	7%	5%	7%
Total	4555	6377	6920	9688	6975	9765	9455	13237	1240	1736
Males	2215	3101	3390	4746	3385	4739	4635	6489	620	868
Females	2345	3283	3530	4942	3590	5026	4820	6748	620	868

Size of LGB population based on 5% government estimation



## KEY AREAS FOR NORTH STAR HOUSING GROUP

### ➤ Resident Involvement

Our Resident Involvement Strategy is designed to ensure that all our tenants and service users are positively encouraged and have equal opportunity to be involved in the governance and management of the Association. As part of this strategy, we aim to remove any potential barriers that could exclude certain groups from becoming involved, such as varying times of our meetings and covering possible childcare costs.

### ➤ Employment

As part of our commitment to equality and diversity the Group aims to ensure that staff at all levels and across business areas reflect the communities and diverse groups we operate in.

We will ensure that our recruitment and selection, training and development opportunities are open and accessible to all.

The Group has adopted a flexible approach to supporting staff with their commitments. As an employer the Group recognises that it can sometimes be difficult to combine work, family and other responsibilities. North Star Housing Group aims to ensure that staff who take Family Leave continue to be treated fairly and that positive steps are taken to help those staff returning to work, to achieve a work life balance that enables them to meet their work and family commitments. The Group has implemented the following policies support the Groups commitment to Family Support, providing information and assistance on the appropriate steps that are required by both the Group and staff at each stage:

- HR6A Maternity Leave and Support
- HR6B Adoption Leave and Support
- HR6C Paternity and Maternity Support Leave

The Group also recognises the importance of having an effective work-life balance in order to maintain staff morale and productivity. The provision of any kind of leave is necessary to achieve this. The Group has implemented the following policies to ensure the fair and consistent management of leave.

- HR8 Annual Leave
- HR8a Special Leave

➤ **Equal Pay**

During 2007 the Group undertook a comprehensive review of Pay & Reward which applied to all posts within the organisation. Full Job Evaluation was undertaken of all posts and equal value was observed.

The Job Classification framework is embedded within the organisation. The Human Resources Function has responsibility for evaluation of all post changes and new posts established within the organisation.

The Group is committed to regularly reviewing salaries against the market and within internal pay band relativities.

➤ **Harassment & Bullying**

North Star is committed to a Harassment & Bullying policy that ensures the fair treatment and dignity at work of all its employees. Bullying and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated in the workplace. Such behaviour will be treated as a disciplinary offence and in certain circumstances it may be unlawful. It is expected that all employees comply with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity and respect.

We will support staff fully in dealing with discrimination or harassment of any kind. Our commitment to staff is to provide a positive working environment for all.

➤ **Domestic Violence**

We understand that domestic violence can take place in the following circumstances:-

- within heterosexual relationships
- within same sex relationships
- between various members of the household e.g. son violent towards his mother

However research shows that in the majority of cases, more women are the victims of domestic violence.

The Group is committed to providing an excellent, flexible and responsive service to the victims of domestic violence. We firmly believe robust multi agency is necessary as no one agency can work effectively in isolation.

➤ **Customer profile – Mapping Communities**

We recently collected data from a 'Getting to know you Questionnaire' which has gathered information about our tenants and the members of their household. The aim of this questionnaire is to ensure continuous improvement of our services and that they serve the needs of our customers.

The information from these questionnaires and our resident information sheets ensures that our services are delivered in a fair and equal way.

## EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Equality impact assessments will be used as the main tool for assessing whether the Group meets its gender equality duties and the relevant legislation. We will continually assess whether our procedures and strategies meet the current needs of our staff and customers. These assessments will provide the basis for action to improve our policies where appropriate.

## EQUALITY & DIVERSITY AT NORTH STAR HOUSING GROUP

The Gender Equality Action Plan is designed to support North Star Housing Group's Commitment to Equality and Diversity Statement and will be in keeping with the "Fairness & Freedom Report".

## GATHERING & USING INFORMATION

The gathering of information from various sources is essential to ensure the success of the Gender Equality Action Plan. This will be done through the demographic profiling of our staff, service users and the wider communities which we operate in. We will also annually review our Equality and Diversity statistical information and benchmark this across the sector. Each business area across the group will collect their own data.

North Star is committed to maintaining high standards of confidentiality in all aspects of its work and uses any private information in a sensitive manner. The information gathered regarding equality and diversity will only be used for benchmarking purposes and assessing our performance in achieving objectives set out in the action plans.

## MONITORING & REVIEWING

The Gender Equality Action Plan will be monitored and reviewed by the Board and Group Senior Management Team.

### ➤ Roles & Priorities

Board Members	Will monitor our success, set targets and performance indicators that will measure our achievement of success against needs analysis, objectives and action plans.
Group Chief Executive	Will champion Equality & Diversity
Group Senior Management Team	Will ensure the mainstream implementation of the action plan through effective leadership
Head of HR & Corporate Services	Will co-ordinate implementation of the Plans and report to the Board, GSMT and Equality and Diversity Group on progress
Heads of Service and Managers	Will oversee implementation, compliance and monitoring of the plan in their business area
All Staff	Will adhere to the Equality and Diversity values

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- Equality and Diversity Commitment Statement
- Equality and Diversity Strategic Objectives
- Disability Equality Statement and Action Plan 2008
- Cultural Diversity Equality Statement and Action Plan 2008
- Job Classification Framework
- Domestic Violence Strategy

**Statement & Action Plans to be Formally Reviewed September 2009**

## Gender Diversity Action Plan

Actions	Target Date	Responsibility	Resources required	Outcomes
Develop a directory of partner organisations in order to improve Gender consultation and promote engagement.	September 2008	Policy & Research Officer	Within Existing Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Making our services more inclusive across genders</li> <li>➤ Developing new &amp; existing services for all genders</li> <li>➤ Making sure we involve all people regardless of gender or sexual orientation and that our outcomes meet their needs</li> <li>➤ Making sure that the impact of our outcomes are assessed to ensure that they do not present a negative effect or discriminate against gender or sexual orientation</li> </ul>
Extend the consultation tool kit to ensure that tenants, residents and partners are involved in developing our services in line with local requirements and best practice.	September 2008	Resident Involvement Officer	Within Existing Resources	
Identify and address any barriers to resident involvement on the grounds of Gender.	December 2008	Resident Involvement Officer	Within Existing Resources	
Include a gender analysis of satisfaction with the service in the next tenant surveys Use the satisfaction survey to identify any unequal outcomes of our processes	2010	Service Coordinators		
Develop further specific services for identified Gender Groups needing support in line with Local Authority priorities / strategies.	On-going	Service Coordinators		
Analysing allocations/ lettings profile according to gender Use the lettings profile to identify any unequal outcomes of our processes	April 2009	Head of Housing Head of Supported Housing	Within Existing Resources	
Publicise Statements and Action Plans on the Intranet, Internet and relevant publicity material.	September 2008	Heads Of Service		

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Resources required</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
When Board members are next recruited consideration is given to attracting a higher number of suitable hard to reach under represented Gender groups within the current Board Membership	On-going as vacancies arise	GCEO		
Develop workforce profile data to inform HR Strategy (R&S, Training & Development, Talent Management, etc.	September 2008	Senior HR Advisor	Within Existing Resources	➤ Making our services more inclusive across genders
Find out from under represented staff gender groups what they consider the barriers or disincentives to career progression are	August 2008	Head of HR	As part of Staff Survey	➤ Developing new & existing services for all genders
To review training and secondment policies to ensure all staff get appropriate and equal assistance to achieve their potential	January 2009	Head of HR	Within Existing Resources	➤ Making sure we involve all people regardless of gender or sexual orientation and that our outcomes meet their needs
To Provide Recruitment & Selection Training for all recruiting staff within the Group. Specifically covering Gender (and other Equality issues)	November 2008	Senior HR Advisor	Within Existing Resources	➤ Making sure that the impact of our outcomes are assessed to ensure that they do not present a negative effect or discriminate against gender or sexual orientation
To review family friendly policies and recruitment procedures to ensure we fully promote the positive things we do to demonstrate commitment to gender equality and remove any identified barriers	March 2008 and on-going	Senior HR Advisor	Within Existing Resources	
Review current Recruitment Application Form gaining feedback from Managers and Applicants	June 2008	HR Advisor	Within Existing Resources	

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Resources required</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
Better understanding of the experience of the repairs service according to gender	December 2009	Head of Property Services	Within Existing Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Making our services more inclusive across genders</li> <li>➤ Developing new &amp; existing services for all genders</li> <li>➤ Making sure we involve all people regardless of gender or sexual orientation and that our outcomes meet their needs</li> <li>➤ Making sure that the impact of our outcomes are assessed to ensure that they do not present a negative effect or discriminate against gender or sexual orientation</li> </ul>
Develop Standards and Expectations for Contractors and Suppliers by development of a tender/ procurement policy that includes gender commitment (Other E&D requirements to be specific)	December 2008	Head of Property Services	Within Existing Resources	
Carryout impact assessments on new build and reinvestment programmes of work	December 2008	Head of Property Services Development Manager		
Analyse the take up and satisfaction of the repairs service according to gender	April 2009	Head of Property Services	Within Existing Resources	
Prioritise health and safety repairs for people who experience DV and ensure that the maintenance budget covers these repairs	Completed April 08	Head of Property Services	Within Existing Resources	
Complete review of current approach to domestic violence (DV.) (Launched with staff at team meetings Staff training has been delivered in partnership with Harbour)	Completed June 2008.	Head of Supported Housing	Within Existing Resources	
Update DV policy and procedure to take account of gender and transgender	Completed	Head of Supported Housing	Within Existing Resources	
Work with LAs and other organisations to access support for our residents that experience DV. Signpost advice and referral to support agencies – Tool Kit for Staff. Harbour have developed a resource pack for us and along with posters and leaflets	Launch September 2008	Service Coordinators	Within Existing Resources	