



*ofgem*

## **Gender Equality Scheme**



Ofgem is committed to promoting equality and diversity, and to improving our performance. We believe that by attracting diverse talent we can drive positive change in our organisation and improve our overall standing as a regulatory body.



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## Introduction

Ofgem is committed to promoting equality and diversity, and to improving our performance. We believe that by attracting diverse talent we can drive positive change in our organisation and improve our overall standing as a regulatory body. We are committed to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- promote equality of opportunity and good relations for all our people
- promote positive attitudes to race, disability and gender equality

An introduction to our equality schemes can be found at [Introducing Our Schemes](http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/Pages/MoreInfor) (<http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/Pages/MoreInfor>

[mation.aspx?docid=2&refer>About%20us/Careers/ved](#)). This provides further details on who we are, what our function is and the purpose of our equality schemes.

The Equality Act 2006 amends the Sexual Discrimination Act 1975 and outlines a specific duty for all public authorities such as Ofgem to publish a Gender Equality Scheme showing how we intend to meet the general and specific duties and setting out gender equality objectives.

The Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) Scheme aims to reassess the way in which we consider gender when carrying out our functions, and to make the promotion of equality of opportunity an integral part of all that we do.

## The Gender Equality Duty

When carrying out our function we, along with all public authorities, are under a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment; and
- promote equality of opportunity between men and women, including transsexual/transgender people.

This is known as the general duty and came into effect on 6 April 2007. For the purposes of this document the term “men and women” includes transsexual/transgender people and also includes the minority groups within these categories (ie disabled women).

We are committed to the observance of this duty, which makes gender equality central to the way in which we operate with regards to:

- policy making
- service delivery
- employment practice

The general duty is supported by specific duties which set out the methodology which will enable Ofgem to meet its general duty. These duties require Ofgem to publish a Gender Equality Scheme to implement the specific duties and to report on them. This Gender Equality Scheme sets out our arrangements for meeting the general and specific statutory duties.

## Gender Equality Scheme

## Ofgem's Gender Equality Scheme

We are committed to meeting our statutory duty on the promotion of gender equality and this scheme details the specific steps that Ofgem is taking to ensure we can meet the objectives of the duty. In particular it looks at:

- the methods for assessing the impact of our current and proposed policies and procedures on gender equality
- the proposed steps towards meeting the general duty through our Action Plan (Annex A)
- arrangements for gathering and monitoring information on the effect of policies and practices on gender equality
- how we use this information to assist in the performance of the general duty, when reviewing the Scheme

- arrangements for consultation with our employees, the industry and relevant stakeholders

The Scheme has been developed through involvement and consultation with our Staff Consultative Committee, Human Resources Working Group and Senior Management Team. We are committed to consult and involve relevant representative groups on an ongoing basis as stated in our Action Plan (Annex A).

The Scheme will be reviewed following the enactment of the Equality Act 2010. Our Action Plan (Annex A) will be reviewed annually and updated to reflect our progress and identify future initiatives.

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## Implementing the Gender Equality Duty

We have been reviewing our business and people policies and processes to ensure they are fit for purpose to meet the general and specific duties. As part of this we are satisfied that equality best practice is an integral part of our business and our people practices.

However, we recognise that there are improvements that we can make and those we have identified to address over the next 12 months are set out in our Action Plan (Annex A).

### **Ofgem's regulatory policy and functions**

We will implement the principles of the gender equality duty to try to ensure that all our dealings with our staff and external stakeholders are free from gender discrimination. We will conform to the fundamental principles of better regulation, which are transparency, consistency, targeting, proportionality and accountability.

We recognise that we need to review how we formulate and implement policies and practices to ensure that their impact on all sections of society has been considered as stated in the Action Plan (Annex A).



## Access to information and services

Ofgem has a dedicated consumer phone number and e-mail address available on the website. It also provides a textphone/minicom service. Our Consumer Affairs team handles all contacts from members of the public seeking information about Ofgem's role and policies, and where necessary redirects consumers to other sources of assistance such as Consumer Direct, other consumer agencies, or their energy company. Where a consumer is

vulnerable or has been disconnected or is threatened with disconnection a direct referral is made on their behalf to the consumer body Consumer Focus. We take great care to respond to everyone in a fair and equitable manner.

Members of the Consumer Affairs team have been trained in 'writing for the reader' to ensure that written responses are given in a plain and understandable form.

## Publications

We regularly publish documents and accompanying press releases and these go through a checking process before publication. Consideration of any potential impact on different sections of society is also given at that time.

A similar process exists for all information we make available and our website is

constantly updated and monitored by our Communications Team.

Internal publications also require the same level of assessment in order to assess their impact. We will ensure impact assessment is a part of the internal publication process where required.

## Procurement

We require external suppliers to complete a pre-qualifying questionnaire to ensure that they promote equality in their organisations and the services they provide, as part of the

tender process. We will monitor our tender processes to ensure equality and diversity continues to be a key evaluation tool when procuring goods and services.



## Ofgem as an employer

Our Human Resources Department monitors and co-ordinates equality and diversity activities. We are always seeking to improve HR policies and practices, to ensure we remain a secure, diverse and attractive place to work.

We strive to ensure that our policies are free of discrimination and promote equality. We will also investigate any suggestions of discriminatory impact to ensure that our policies are meeting equality legislative protection and ensure that action is taken to remove any identified bias.

We will ensure regular monitoring is conducted in relation to gender, focusing on the numbers of:

- staff in post and promotions
- applicants for employment
- staff who receive training
- staff who benefit or suffer detriment as a result of our performance assessment procedures

### a) Workforce Profile

We collate staff in post figures broken down by ethnicity, gender and disability as part of management information reporting.

We are aware that our existing systems for collating this data could be more efficient.

- staff who are involved in grievance procedures
- staff who are the subject of disciplinary procedures
- staff who cease employment with us.

The results of these monitoring exercises will be reported to Senior Management Team (SMT), Staff Consultative Committee (SCC) and HR Working Group (HRWG).

The Human Resources team will continue to work in partnership with the staff representative groups to make employment practices more diverse in their creation and application. We will encourage and enable our staff to have frank discussions to identify discrimination at the earliest opportunity, and work towards eliminating it.

We will be looking at our electronic personnel database to assist with the enhanced reporting of this information.



## b) Applicants for employment

Equal opportunities data from applicants for each vacancy is collected on an independent form which is removed from the application prior to any sifting and interviewing, to ensure that there is no bias on equality grounds.

As above we are aware that our existing systems for collating this needs to be more efficient and will be working with our recruitment partners to develop a data

collection process and reporting on this, as part of each recruitment campaign.

We endeavour to represent both men and women on selection panels and that they are provided with training, advice and guidance, in conducting best practice selection interviews.

## c) Applicants for promotions

Promotion opportunities where expertise is available within Ofgem are advertised in internal campaigns and we will investigate any suggestions of discrimination from employees on the grounds that they have been denied equality of opportunity at any stage of the internal recruitment process.

Again, we are aware that our existing systems for collating data on this could be more efficient but expect this to improve with the development of better reporting from our electronic personnel database.

## d) Diversity targets

The Government is committed to achieving greater representation of minority ethnic staff, women and staff with disabilities at senior levels.

The Government's most recent targets in respect of greater representation of women at senior levels across the Civil Service are:

- 39% of the Senior Civil Service are women by 2013;
- 34% of top management posts are filled by women by 2013

The representation of women at senior levels in Ofgem as at May 2010 was:

- 35% at Senior Civil Service level
- 25% at top management level

We have reviewed our employee handbook, policies and processes in terms of internal moves, promotion, career development and training to ensure that they are objective and transparent and to see how we can increase gender balance at different levels.

## e) Learning and development

At present all training events are available to all staff, if relevant to their work and career. We will investigate any suggestions of discrimination from employees on the grounds that they have been denied access to learning and development.

We intend to strengthen our approach to equality and diversity in this area and deliver training to staff to raise awareness of their responsibilities and obligations under the gender equality duty, as set out in the Action Plan (Annex A).

## f) Performance management and pay

We analyse all annual assessments of performance and the allocation of financial rewards in terms of race, gender and disability (as well as grade and directorate), to see if there are any potential diversity issues that need to be addressed.

We have just reviewed our performance management system as part of the drive to ensure our policies and procedures meet

out duties under the equality legislation. The revised system provides clarity and detailed information regarding the annual assessment process and its consistent and objective application.



### g) Work life balance

Ofgem goes beyond the statutory right to request flexible working by extending the opportunity to all staff regardless of their personal circumstances, to help balance their work with their responsibilities and commitments outside of work. We have just updated our flexible working scheme that supports alternative work patterns through flexi time, part time hours, and

condensed hours. Our staff also benefit from a childcare voucher scheme, generous maternity, paternity and adoption leave entitlements and special leave arrangements. Ofgem has a maternity return rate of 93% which is double the national average of 47% (Equal Opportunities Commission data).

### h) Grievance and disciplinary cases

We aim, through good management, to achieve early resolution of any cases relating to grievance and disciplinary issues. This aim includes scrutiny for diversity issues

and we will continue to improve practices and policies where possible.

### i) Leavers

All staff that leave us are invited to attend an exit interview, if they wish. This is an opportunity for them to explain their reasons for leaving and give us feedback on improvements that Ofgem can reasonably make. We will review this process to include feedback on gender issues at Ofgem.

We intend to report on this data and any trends to our Senior Management Team, Senior Consultative Committee and Human Resources Working Group as identified in the Action Plan (Annex A).

## Review of Gender Equality Scheme

We will review this Scheme following the enactment of the Equality Act 2010.

If you have any queries or comments about this Scheme, please contact Human Resources on 020 7901 7312.

## Annex A: Action Plan – Gender Equality Scheme

We have identified a number of areas that require improvement and also areas where new initiatives will be required to take forward our statutory duties. We will implement the actions identified, in the next 12 months.

Objective	Action	Responsibility
Functions and policies	Prepare and publish Gender Equality Scheme, to be reviewed in 2011. The action plan will be reviewed annually and updated as appropriate following our progress on initiatives stated herein	Senior Management Team/ Human Resources
	Assess and review our policies and procedures where there may be an impact on gender equality; and propose actions to address any adverse impact	Directors/Human Resources
Consultation with stakeholders	Identify and engage with relevant groups representing men and women before making new policy or changing existing policy affecting our staff and our service, with regards to gender equality	Sustainable Development
	Incorporate relevant feedback into policy development	Sustainable Development
	Improve effectiveness of consultation with stakeholders with dedicated resources allocated to this.	Sustainable Development
Publishing information	Ensure that all our published information goes through impact assessment with regards to equality	Communications/ Senior Management Team
Procurement	Ensure that procurement activities comply with equality legislation by, including equalities duty in service level agreements and contracts; and ensure compliance with pre-qualifying equality questionnaire	Group Finance

Objective	Action	Responsibility
Employment	Assess and consult where appropriate on likely impact of Ofgem's employment policies and procedures on gender equality	Human Resources
	Produce annual statistical return on gender and report to our Senior Management Team, Staff Consultative Committee and Human Resources Working Group	Human Resources/ Finance
	We will deliver training to staff to raise awareness of their responsibilities and obligations under the gender equality duty	Human Resources
	We will monitor equality data from our learning and development initiatives to ensure equality, access and fairness. We will ensure that our training programmes and external training providers take account of equality policies	Human Resources
	Develop our HR database capability to allow us to capture recruitment and selection information. Review this information to ensure that we remove any identified bias and promote equality of opportunity address questions about gender equality. We will take action, where appropriate, to address any imbalances and improvements identified	Human Resources

Objective	Action	Responsibility
Employment	We will monitor our revised performance management process to ensure that staff are being treated fairly. We will report on this to our Senior Management Team, Staff Consultative Committee and Human Resources Working Group	Human Resources
	We will monitor and review our pay objectives to address any inequalities that may exist with regards to gender or associated issues such as working hours	Human Resources
	We have reviewed our exit questionnaires to address questions about gender equality. We will take action, where appropriate, to address any imbalances and improvements identified	Human Resources



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