

Equality and Diversity Scheme

2022 to 2025

1. Foreword

South Yorkshire Pensions Authority is a small specialist public authority responsible for administering and safeguarding the £10bn+ of pension savings of around 167,000 current and former employees of local public services across the County. Like any organisation involved in the provision of services to the public, we are required to abide by the provisions of equality legislation in the way in which we both run our organisation and deliver services to scheme members and employers.

This scheme sets out a series of objectives which will make us a more equal and diverse organisation. These objectives do not, though, stand outside the mainstream of our work as something separate and “other”, they are central to ensuring we deliver better more customer focussed services to the people we serve. Consequently the activity which meets these equality and diversity objectives will also appear within our new corporate strategy.

We will report back annually on what we have achieved against our objectives both to the Authority and to stakeholders in our Annual Report.

Councillor John Mounsey
Chair
South Yorkshire Pensions Authority

George Graham
Fund Director

2. Policy

The Authority's policy position in relation to Equality and Diversity is set out in a number of documents:

- The Single Equality Scheme 2010 – 2013 (2010), which this scheme replaces
- The Equal Opportunities Policy (2012), which relates to employment matters specifically.
- The Diversity Statement (2013)

The Authority is not identified as within the scope of the Public Sector Equality Duty within the Equality Act 2010. However, as a public body it is expected to act in line with the duty and to act reasonably in everything it does. Clearly to not follow the framework provided in the Equality Act would be to act unreasonably. Therefore the Authority acts as though the Equality Duty fully applies to it.

The last document listed above sets out a helpful statement of principles and states the Authority's commitment to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity
- Eliminating discrimination
- Integrating equal opportunities into all aspects of the Pensions Authority's activities
- Ensuring that equality operates in the Authority's employment practices
- Ensuring that equality operates in the provision of services

All of these commitments remain relevant today and are reflected in the objectives and actions set out in this scheme.

Fundamentally the Authority believes that no one who comes into contact with it, for whatever reason, should have cause to feel that they have received less than an appropriate and professional service. Consequently we will look to address both our systems and processes, and attitudes and behaviours to ensure that we do not discriminate against any individual or group of individuals.

3. Organisational background

South Yorkshire Pensions Authority began operations on 1st April 1988 as part of the arrangements put in place to handle the functions previously carried out by the South Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council following its abolition.

The Authority is made up of 12 members drawn from the 4 District Councils (Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and the City of Sheffield) roughly in proportion to population. The Authority is responsible for investing the c. £8.2bn assets of the South Yorkshire Pension Fund in order to pay the pension benefits accrued by the c.160,000 members of the Local Government Pension Scheme in the County. The members of the scheme work for nearly 500 different employers including the District Councils, universities and colleges, the Fire and Police services and an increasing number of academy schools as well as organisations which provide services to local authorities under contracts.

The bulk of the Authority's staff are based at the Headquarters office in Barnsley with small teams based in offices in each of the District Council areas.

The over-riding aim of the Pension Fund is to ensure that money is available to pay pensions when they become due. This means that the Authority seeks to obtain the best possible financial return in order to meet its liabilities which could fall due as much as 50 years into the future.

The payment and calculation of pensions due under the Local Government Pension Scheme is a very complicated process requiring the Authority to maintain a significant staff and invest in a range of information systems for the purposes of record keeping and the making of payments. In addition the responsibility for the investment of a very large pension fund places a significant number of regulatory requirements on the Authority.

As a result the Authority has developed a governance structure which allows it to devote appropriate attention to the whole range of risks and issues with which it is faced. Many of the more operational responsibilities of the Authority are discharged through other bodies, or by officers under a scheme of delegation in particular:

- The Authority's Audit Committee oversees the control environment and risk management framework.
- The Staffing, Appointments and Appeals Committee, which deals with the appointment of senior staff, major staffing and HR policy matters and various appeals either related to employment issues or in relation to the operation of discretions within the Pension Scheme.

In addition the Authority is required to maintain a Local Pension Board to scrutinise its performance of its role. The Board is made up of equal numbers of representatives of scheme members and employers.

All of these bodies meet in public and the papers for the meetings are publically available through the internet.

The Authority is also required to publish and maintain a range of strategy and policy documents and to publish an Annual Report. In addition newsletters are produced on a regular basis for scheme members.

All of this information is publically available through the internet.

4. Development of the scheme

This scheme has been developed by the Authority's Senior Management Team to support the process of refreshing the Corporate Strategy. This process has involved limited consultation but has involved external advice from colleagues at Barnsley MBC.

The process has involved the development of a number of objectives which align with the Authority's corporate strategy, the refresh of which has taken into account both information around changes in the membership of the Pension Fund and key data on the composition of the Authority's workforce, and has involved engagement with a wider range of stakeholders.

As a result of aligning the two processes it has been possible to reflect the views of stakeholders in both this scheme and the corporate strategy.

It is accepted that there are limitations to this approach and consequently one of the actions identified in this scheme is the need to develop means of actively engaging with both scheme members and groups in the wider community to ensure that the services we deliver and the way in which we operate do not discriminate in any way.

5. Governance of the scheme

As this scheme is a major policy document responsibility for approving it lies with the Full Authority. Having aligned the scheme with the Corporate Strategy in terms of timescale (both will cover a 3 year actuarial valuation period) future iterations of this scheme will be approved alongside the corporate strategy as a key part of the Authority's corporate planning framework.

Given that the scheme commits the Authority to a range of actions it is important that progress on these actions is reported back to elected members on a regular basis so that they can initiate any action that might be necessary. Regular reports will be provided to the Authority on the implementation of the Corporate Strategy and these will include progress on the issues identified in this Scheme. Progress will also be included in the Annual Report which is addressed to a much wider group of stakeholders.

6. The public sector equality duty

As stated above the Authority intends to act as though the full scope of the duties set out in the Equality Act 2010 applies to it. Thus when exercising its functions the Authority will have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These are sometimes referred to as the three aims or arms of the general equality duty. The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Act states that meeting different needs involves taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities. It describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups. It states that compliance with the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

These equality duty aims and activities have informed the development of our equality objectives and associated action plans.

7. The authority's vision in relation to equality and diversity

The Authority has developed the following statement which summarises where it wants to be in relation to equality and diversity by the end of the period covered by this scheme.

“South Yorkshire Pensions Authority aims to reflect the diverse communities we serve in all areas of our work and will strive to achieve a workforce that reflects the community we serve. In delivering our services and managing our organisation we aim to treat every person we come into contact with fairly irrespective of any protected characteristic they might possess.”

The objectives we have set out later in this scheme are intended to enable the achievement of this vision.

Specifically this scheme supports the objectives set out in the Corporate Strategy, which are:



8. Having your say and raising issues

Improving the way in which we as an organisation engage with and seek to understand people with protected characteristics is a key objective of this scheme. In the meantime we are happy to receive any feedback about this Equality and Diversity Scheme whether from pension scheme members or members of the wider community.

Any feedback can be sent to:

George Graham
Fund Director
South Yorkshire Pensions Authority
Floor 8
Gateway Plaza
Sackville Street
BARNSELY
South Yorkshire
S70 2RD
E mail FundDirector@sypa.org.uk

Anyone who feels we have not lived up to the aspirations within this Scheme in terms of treating them fairly has a right to make a complaint. This can be formally addressed by:

Informing the Chair of the Pensions Authority

The Chair
South Yorkshire Pensions Authority
c/o Joint Authorities Governance Unit
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Town Hall
BARNSELY
South Yorkshire
S70 2TS
E mail memberservices@sypa.org.uk
Through our website www.sypensions.org.uk

**Informing the Equality and Human Rights Commission,
through the Equality Advice and Support Service**

Phone: 0808 800 0082
Textphone: 0808 800 0084

You can email using the contact form on the EASS website, www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

Also available through the website are BSL interpretation, web chat services and a contact form. Alternatively EASS can be contacted by post;

FREEPOST
EASS HELPLINE
FPN6521

Informing your local Race Equality Council.

Scheme members who feel they have not been treated fairly in the way in which we have interpreted the pension regulations may also have a right of appeal to the Pensions Ombudsman or can raise issues with the Pensions Regulator. Details are available through the Authority's website.

9. What we Intend to do to address equality and diversity issues

We have identified a number of things we want to achieve in relation to equality and diversity issues and the following pages set out what these are, why they are important, how we are going to achieve them and how we will know we have achieved them.

Objective 1

What we want to achieve

To make our services more accessible to disabled customers.

Why this is important

Some disabled people cannot access services on-line or use the telephone. For others face to face meetings can be difficult to get to.

What we are going to do and when

- Continue to develop communications channels where necessary to enable customers to contact us in ways that are accessible to them. *(Rolling programme of activity)*
- Publicise the opportunity to receive information in accessible formats for customers. *(Ongoing process).*
- To ensure public areas of our new office at Oakwell House are accessible to disabled customers. *(Assessment of further requirements (if any) to be undertaken during 2022)*
- To ensure when we use other building and venues that these are fully accessible. *(Ongoing process)*
- Ensure disabled customers are fully aware of our disability access initiatives and how to request or participate in these if needed. *(Ongoing process).*

How we will know if we have been successful

- The number of contact channels available to disabled customers.
- The level of accessibility of our office building.
- The number of disabled customers who have opted to use each contact channel or have received / downloaded information in accessible formats.

Equality Objective 2

What we want to achieve

Through our engagement activity with scheme members and employers to promote equality and inclusion, and to help bring people from different backgrounds together.

Why this is important

The public sector equality duty requires public authorities to consider how they can help to promote good relations between those from different backgrounds. The Authority provides benefits to and regularly communicates with a large and diverse number of customers which may provide opportunities to promote greater knowledge and understanding.

What we are going to do and when

- Identify whether any group with protected characteristics is underrepresented in the membership of the Pension Fund when compared to their representation within the employer's workforce. *(Data gathering process with larger employers during 2022 and 2023).*
- Identify potential causes of any underrepresentation and design and implement a communications strategy to address it. *(From 2023 onwards on an ongoing basis).*

How we will know if we have been successful

- Balance of scheme membership will reflect the balance of the employer's workforce.

Equality Objective 3

What we want to achieve

To ensure decision-making in the Authority is informed by a robust and clear impact assessment of how people with protected characteristics will be affected, taking action to reduce any inequalities where appropriate.

Why this is important

When making decisions about customer service, policies and other activities that affect customers or employees there is need to have "due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not."

What we are going to do

- Develop an Equality Impact Assessment process for all new or revised policies or services. This should enable robust, timely and proportionate EIAs to be developed and reported to decision-makers. *(To be produced during the first half of 2022/23)*
- Provide appropriate employees with the necessary training and support to undertake the EIA process. *(To be completed by the end of Quarter 1 2023/24)*

How we will know if we have been successful

- EIA process reviewed and revised as necessary.
- EIA process peer reviewed.

Equality Objective 4

What we are going to do

To ensure the workforce's diversity reflects that of the customers we serve.

Why this is important

A workforce that reflects the diversity of the customers they serve will be better able to meet their diverse needs, to engage with those communities and to draw on the greatest range of skills, knowledge and abilities that the community has to offer.

Currently the Authority's workforce does not reflect the characteristics of the wider community in which it exists. The table below makes the comparisons possible with the data currently available using data from the 2011 Census for both the Barnsley district, where our headquarters are located and South Yorkshire as a whole, which is the area we serve as compared to data for the Authority at the end of March 2021.

| Characteristic | SYPA % | Barnsley % | South Yorkshire % |
|-------------------|-----------|---------------|----------------------|
| Gender | | | |
| Female | 60% | 51% | 51% |
| Male | 40% | 49% | 49% |
| Ethnicity | | | |
| Non-white | 2.1% | 2.0% | 9.0% |
| White | 97.9% | 98.0% | 91.0% |
| Disability | | | |
| Disability | 6.4% | 24.0% | 21.0% |
| No Disability | 93.6% | 76.0% | 79.0% |
| Age | | | |
| 0-19 | 2.13% | 23.5% | 24.3% |
| 20-29 | 11.70% | 12.1% | 14.4% |
| 30-39 | 30.85% | 11.9% | 12.3% |
| 40-49 | 30.85% | 15.6% | 14.6% |
| 50-59 | 22.34% | 13.2% | 12.1% |
| 60-69 | 2.13% | 11.7% | 10.7% |
| 70+ | 0.0% | 11.9% | 11.7% |

Information related to the other protected characteristics are not available, and staff are not required to report any disability therefore it is likely that numbers of staff with some form of disability is under-recorded.

What we are going to do

- Monitor and report on workforce diversity, including reinstating annual update processes for information on areas such as disability. *(Annual process)*
- Identify areas of under-representation and develop plans to address these. *(Part of the Human Resources Strategy)*

How we will know if we have been successful

- Percentage of employees who have protected characteristics.

Equality Objective 5

What we want to achieve

To ensure the workforce culture, environment, policies and practices are safe, accessible, and inclusive for people with protected characteristics.

Why this is important

The authority has a duty to treat its employees with fairness, dignity and respect at all times, to encourage people to report any problems and show leadership to develop a respectful working culture.

What we are going to do

- Consult with employees to better understand their experience of working for the Authority. *(Biennial Staff Survey next due in 2022).*
- Ensure all employees are fully aware of expectations with regards equality and diversity and how to report any concerns, through induction and training programmes and that these issues are reflected in the appraisal process. *(Part of the mandatory training identified in the Human Resources Strategy).*
- Develop plans to address any concerns raised accordingly. *(Actions arising from the Staff Survey will form part of the work plan of the Senior Management Team on an annual basis.)*

How we will know if we have been successful

- Percentage of employees who have been inducted and trained in E+D.
- Number of reports / complaints concerning equality and diversity issues.

Equality Objective 6

What we want to achieve

Where statistically possible, to identify and reduce any pay gaps that exist associated with gender, disability or ethnicity.

Why this is important

The authority has a duty to pay its workforce equally and has committed to reporting on any gender pay gaps, although not required to do so. We will report our findings and publish them on our website.

What we are going to do

- Monitor pay for all employees for equal pay for work of equal value and for any pay gaps, *(Information published annually)*
- Take action where inequalities are identified. *(Reflected in the Human Resources Strategy).*

How we will know if we have been successful

- Pay gaps within the organisation for gender, ethnicity and disability.