Channel 4 Equality Objectives
August 2014

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out the background and context around diversity and inclusion at Channel 4 as well as setting out our ‘Equality Objectives’ from our diversity strategy.

2. Introduction

Channel 4 has always been a different kind of broadcaster. One that broadcasts difference: different voices, perspectives and viewpoints.

On 2nd November 1982 Channel 4 began transmitting as an alternative to the mainstream. This made Channel 4 a natural home for diversity. We like to think that diversity is part of our DNA. Freedom of imagination and diversity of thought fuel our mission with mischief.

Channel 4 has always led the way when it comes to diversity. Desmond’s was a very popular situation comedy with a predominantly black cast. It provided an insight on the lives of a socially mobile black family. This had not been seen on British screens before.

Brookside which was set in Liverpool, tackled realistic socially challenging storylines. The soap was the first to feature an openly gay character. It also broadcast the first pre-watershed lesbian kiss on British television.

Successes that are strikingly diverse television programming includes: Top Boy, My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding, Seven Dwarfs, One Born Every Minute, Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields, The Promise, Katie: My Beautiful Face, our multi-award winning Dispatches and long-running Shameless.

The London 2012 and our BAFTA-winning coverage of the Paralympics have been the biggest events in Channel 4’s history. As the official UK broadcaster, Channel 4 treated the Paralympic Games as the main event, not a sideshow to the Olympic Games, and we maintain a commitment to disability sport.

We pride ourselves on the wide range of passionate and talented people we employ. Not only does this reflect our audience more accurately, it also promotes creative thinking both on and off screen. By attracting people from all different backgrounds and walks of life, we have created an environment in which everyone feels free to contribute to the way our organisation works. Diversity is not about the colour of someone’s skin; it goes way beyond that. Diversity is about being all-inclusive, regardless of culture, nationality, religious persuasion, physical and mental ability, sexual orientation, race, age, background and addressing social mobility.

Diversity of thought and opinion helps us to innovate, be distinctive and encourage people to think in different ways.

3. Channel 4’s Public Service Remit and Obligations

Following the coming into force of the Digital Economy Act 2010, the objectives of Channel 4 are set out in section 199(2) of the Communications Act 2003 (as amended) and include, among other things:

The provision of content on the main Channel 4 service which appeals to the tastes and interests of a culturally diverse society, demonstrates innovation, experiment and creativity in the form and content of programmes, and exhibits a distinctive character;

- Participating in the making of a broad range of relevant media content of high quality that, taken as a whole, appeals to the tastes and interests of a culturally diverse society;

- Promoting measures intended to secure that people are well-informed and motivated to participate in society in a variety of ways;
• Supporting the development of people with creative talent, particularly at the beginning of their careers;

• Supporting and stimulating well-informed debate on a wide range of issues, including by providing access to information and views from around the world and by challenging established views; and

• Promoting alternative views and new perspectives.

Implicit in all of these objectives is the ambition to positively develop an all-inclusive culture and ‘go to’ organisation where diverse and talented people can thrive. Therefore Channel 4 welcomes the new Equality Act 2010 which we see as being entirely consistent with Channel 4’s own objectives.

4. Background to the Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) replaced previous anti-discrimination laws. The Act is designed to simplify and strengthen anti-discrimination laws and put everything in one place rather than across a range of different statutory instruments. It covers nine protected characteristics which cannot be used as a reason to treat people unfairly. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, and sexual orientation (the protected characteristics).

5. The Public Sector Equality Duty and the Specific Duties

The public sector equality duty (section 149 of the Act) came into force on 5 April 2011. The equality duty applies to public bodies including Channel 4. Public bodies, when carrying out their functions, must have due regard to three specific matters:

a) **Eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;

b) **Advance equality of opportunity** between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and

c) **Foster good relations** between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not.

The equality duty is intended to “…support good decision making by ensuring that public bodies consider how different people will be affected by their activities, helping them to deliver policies and services which are efficient and effective; accessible to all; and which meet different people’s needs.”

The equality duty is supported by specific duties, set out in regulations which came into force on 10 September 2011. Public bodies listed in the regulations are required to:

a) Publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the equality duty at least annually. Channel 4, has published this information and it is available at http://www.channel4.com/info/corporate/legal/diversity; and

b) Set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years. This document deals principally with this requirement.

It is worth noting that the anti-discrimination legislation no longer places any requirement on public bodies to prepare or publish equality schemes, equality action plans, equality impact assessments or separate annual reports on equality.

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6. Exclusions applicable to Channel 4

Channel 4’s editorial decision making processes are exempt from the anti-discrimination obligations in the Act. This means that a viewer could not, for example, bring a claim for discrimination against Channel 4 in relation to an editorial decision about what programmes to commission; on what day a specific programme should be shown; or what character should appear in a particular programme.

In addition, in order to ensure that Channel 4’s editorial independence from Government is not compromised, Channel 4’s content related activities are exempted from the public sector equality duty and the specific obligations required in order to meet it. This means that the Act does not require Channel 4 to promote equality in, for example, its news and current affairs output. That is not to say that Channel 4’s output is unregulated; it is required to comply with the Ofcom Broadcasting Code.

7. The Ofcom Broadcasting Code and Equal Opportunities

Channel 4 is licensed by the television regulator, Ofcom, which operates The Ofcom Broadcasting Code (“the Code”); The Code contains a number of rules which are relevant to non-discrimination. The Code, amongst other things, ensures that:

• Generally accepted standards are applied to Channel 4’s content so as to provide adequate protection for members of the public from the inclusion in such services of harmful and/or offensive material.

• In applying generally accepted standards, material which may cause offence is justified by context. Such material may include discriminatory treatment or language (for example on the grounds of age, disability, gender, race, religion, beliefs and sexual orientation).

• Channel 4 exercises the proper degree of responsibility with respect to religious programming.

• News is reported with due accuracy and presented with due impartiality.

Furthermore, the Communications Act 2003 and Channel 4’s public service broadcast licence, requires Channel 4 to make and from time to time review arrangements for promoting equality of opportunity and to publish these arrangements. In fulfilment of this condition, Channel 4 reports annually to the broadcasting regulator, Ofcom on:

• Arrangements for promoting equal opportunities in employment;

• The arrangements for monitoring job applicants and the composition of Channel 4 staff;

• Supervision and evaluation of the steps taken to promote equal opportunities;

• Employment statistics;

• Priorities for the promotion of equal opportunities in the forthcoming year; and

• Issues relating to on-screen portrayal.

2 Schedule 3, Part 8, Paragraph 31 of the Act

3 The public sector equality duty is imposed on the public bodies listed in Schedule 19. Schedule 19 lists Channel 4 in the following way: “The Channel Four Television Corporation, except in respect of –
(a) functions relating to the provision of a content service (within the meaning given by section 32(7) of the Communications Act 2003), and
(b) The function of carrying on the activities referred to in section 199 of that Act”.


8. Channel 4 as an Employer

The exclusions referred to in section 5 above do not apply to Channel 4’s employment obligations under the Act which need to be considered and observed in the context of selecting, removing or replacing on-screen talent (albeit most often through an Independent Production Company) as well as in employment decisions Channel 4 takes in relation to its own staff.

Accordingly, as an employer and potential decision maker in relation to on-screen talent, Channel 4 will still need to ensure that it (i) always acts in accordance with the anti-discrimination obligations contained in the Act, and (ii) never acts in ways when making decisions with regard to staff and/or on-screen talent which are prohibited by the Act.

Channel 4 also retains the broader obligation to advance equality of opportunity. In this regard, Channel 4 publishes annual data which analyses the effect of our policies and practices on the protected groups (available at http://www.channel4.com/info/corporate/legal/diversity). In addition, our equality objectives, set out below, have a strong focus on employment equality objectives.

9. Channel 4’s Equality Objectives (Diversity Strategy)

As referred to above, the promotion of equality and diversity is hard wired into Channel 4’s statutory functions and DNA. Accordingly, Channel 4 believes it is important to have specific and measurable objectives regardless of any separate statutory equality duty.

Channel 4’s Diversity Strategy therefore sets out our equality objectives which build on what we have done to date. We will:

1. Increase the diversity of the creative companies and talent we engage with
2. Be the “go to” organisation where diverse and talented people can thrive
3. Improve data for high quality and transparent insights and decision making
4. Develop leadership and organisation mind-set that continually makes diversity part of its DNA

For each of these objectives, Channel 4 will set out: (a) what it considers success will look like; and (b) key annual benchmarks. Accordingly, all of these strategic goals are both specific and measurable.