

## **B2 - Gender - The Results of Participation, Consultation and Involvement**

### **4.1 Summary Observations of Results**

The research brought a wealth of interesting opinions which range broadly from “gender blindness” to “there’s a lot to be done”, to the political correctness gone mad” schools of thought and reflect the challenges presented by a sophisticated stakeholder group. We aim to capture and balance these opinions in a way that contributes positively to gender equality for our GES.

Regarding the demographics of the sample of 135 external and 140 staff respondents, the gender breakdown was broadly 75% women to 25% men, in line with most research in this area. There was not significant differential between men and women regarding religion, disability, age, sexual orientation or race. Any further breakdown of the statistics may lead to risks regarding confidentiality particular with internal responses.

Although the number of transgender respondents was very small, and statistically not very significant, we have attempted to reflect the relevant views and issues where possible.

#### **4.1.1 External General Consultation: Summary Observations**

Over 2,000 readers and 90 organisations were encouraged to get involved in the consultation exercise and share their opinions and experiences regarding gender equality and the use of public facilities, specifically in the British Library.

**Using Public Facilities** - 135 questionnaire respondents and the public focus group coincided strongly in their indication of the importance on the following three issues:

- Facilities
- Atmosphere and Environment
- Policy Framework

**Facilities:** There was a focus on good facilities (opening hours, locker space, gender-equal toilet and cloakroom facilities), but few respondents indicated that childcare/catering/toilets were important and a majority of respondents rated baby/child-focussed facilities as unimportant. There was a sense that if the opening hours were more flexible then specific facilities would be less relevant as other arrangements could be made.

**Atmosphere and Environment:** gender-friendly customer service was the single item that attracted high ratings across the board (58% of women rating it very important; 85% of men rating it either very important, important or fairly important) which says something about how valuable gender-appropriate communication is seen to be. The focus group talked about the need to feel welcomed and included. And questionnaire respondents commented throughout on the importance of good communication and the ‘feel’ of the organisation. For example:

*‘I think it is more important to have good practice in action than lots of signs and information about it e.g. more important to have staff who are sensitive.’*

Despite some significant gender differences in the ratings, with men - and sometimes women – often rating ‘soft’ issues as less important, the value of a positive and

sensitive atmosphere and environment created by well-trained and aware staff came through strongly.

Additionally, as the focus group put it – an opinion matched in the questionnaire – ‘A greater respect for women would be in evidence if there was greater and more appropriate representation of women and their achievements.’ The group liked the idea of the BL being a role model. In the role of influencer/promoter, the BL needs to reflect and promote the richness of gender (including transgender).

Policy Framework: A robust gender-aware policy framework needs to underpin the work of the BL in relation to gender equality and the Library’s readers, users and members of the public. Respondents rated highly the importance of good complaints and anti-harassment policies, as well as flexible working policies that support both men and women (seen as more important by men than women). The range of responses also shows, implicitly, the need for policies to reinforce gender and diversity good practice.

A lot of the evidence tended to point to the fact that approximately half of the respondents had not visited the BL, not noticed, or were just unaware of gender-related issues. Once again this may change as awareness is raised.

### **Positive and Proactive about Gender Equality**

*‘There is nothing specific anywhere that shows gender awareness’*

Only 24% of respondents agreed that the BL is positive and proactive about gender awareness. This may be due partly to ‘gender-blindness’ and partly to an antagonism to anything that smacks of political correctness. Yet, as the Gender Equality Duty expects public organisations to be proactive about gender equality, the Library should aim to improve awareness over time.

### **Experiences of the using British Library**

The vast majority of male and female respondents rated the Library positively in terms of the facilities and services provided. Fewer than 10% reported having been made to feel uncomfortable, been treated unfairly or discriminated against ( 7 women and 1 man) with mixed responses when asked about resolution and satisfaction. Although the numbers are not especially significant statistically, it might be worth paying attention to any changes over time, particularly following the GED policy review process.

### **Respondent suggestions for improvement**

*‘Understand that there is not a level playing field - to make things equally fair is about redressing the balance and proactively combating sexism and its legacy which has favoured men at women's expense. Just treating men and women equally is not enough’*

*‘It would be nice to see some male dusters and female electricians’*

*‘Don’t take political correctness too far - ensure that all you do is focused on the best services for the public vs. ensuring that gender equality is number 1 (e.g. hire the best people for the role irrespective of gender, exhibit work that is important irrespective)’*

*‘Ability to use reading rooms on Sunday might help some women who have weekday childcare issues’*

*‘Gender equality should be mainstreamed - on the agenda of every committee and totally inclusive throughout the organisation.’*

#### 4.1.2 Internal Staff Consultation: Summary Observations

Staff were encouraged to get involved in the consultation exercise through intranet invitations, posters, mentions at meetings and personal invitations and 140 responded by completing the online questionnaire and seven attended the focus group in Boston Spa.

Using the questionnaire themes as a template, the results are grouped into the following:

- Equal Treatment
- Less Favourable Treatment
- Promoting Gender Equality

Equal Treatment: Over 60% of men and 60% of women indicated that they are satisfied or very satisfied that staff are treated equally by the British Library. Interestingly, the range of comments linked to these ratings shows a rich variety of opinion existing among staff, with opinions ranging from *no problem*, to *women are favoured*, and to *men are favoured*.

Of those less satisfied, a small percentage of females (very small actual numbers) provided a negative response regarding equal treatment of women in certain categories:

- Remuneration (20.8% women negative)
- Promotion (29.2% women negative)

By the same token, there were two areas where a few males felt that men were treated unfavourably (ditto small actual numbers):

- Family-friendly (29.5% men negative)
- Flexible working (22.7% men negative)

Less Favourable Treatment: only a very small percentage of respondents (18%) mentioned having been treated less favourably (11% of men and 21% of women). Line management and HR were indicated as the main reporting routes for difficulties, although there seemed some lack of clarity about an 'official' route.

About 7% of respondents reported observing or experiencing unfair treatment to men, women and transgender men and women belonging to various groups (e.g. BME, LGB, disabled people etc.). As is often the case with questions about different 'groups', the responses were broadly about the group and not necessarily about the gender issues within the group but at least the issues are being raised.

Also, regarding policies adversely affecting these groups – 85% of respondents weren't aware of any. 9 women and 6 men reported 'yes' policies with an adverse effect do exist, although, apart from the 'flexitime' policy, nothing specific was mentioned in the comments.

*'Parents who are at a grade higher than B who have children are disadvantaged as flexi-time is unavailable to them and therefore cannot support their children through school activities'*

Promoting gender equality in the BL regarding staff and employment: there were many thoughtful comments. Flexible working, however, came out strongly as a key gender equality for staff. The following are some examples of comments and suggestions:

- Flexible working practices (*'Reinstate its best practices (e.g. FWH) to make it a truly family-friendly organisation, in line with government policies'*)
- Roles of women – further investigations needed (*'Address the problem of underlying sexual discrimination, i.e. look beyond statistics, talk to staff'*)
- Childcare (*'If a woman or man leave work for a few years to look after children they should return on the same salary they would have been expected to get if they had kept on at work'*)
- Training/promoting change/policies (*'Sensitive, intelligent, non-intrusive diversity awareness courses could be held. And e-learning could be used.'*) *'Don't think anything needs to be done. Any problems I would think are down to how an individual treats someone else and I am not sure how policies can change this.'*)
- Career development (*'Perhaps a more structured approach to career development, the opportunity for secondment to different teams or work areas in order to gain experience'*)
- HR policy (*'Publicise more information giving gender statistics e.g. balance between men/women at different levels/locations, at recruitment/promotion'*)
- Research tool (*'I don't know but this sort of consultation is good to get ideas for action'*)
- North-south divide (*'The work-life balance issues caused by north and south working discriminate severely against those with family responsibilities, which tend to fall more on women than on men'*).

#### **4.1.3 Recommendations**

##### **Ongoing Consultation with External Stakeholders**

- Consider setting up a gender equality (or diversity) external reference group for ongoing consultation and involvement
- To increase the involvement and response rate from external groups and individuals, consider focusing the gender equality goals on specific 'themes' and target relevant groups for consultation.

##### **Ongoing Consultation with Internal Stakeholders**

- Consider adding gender awareness and equality satisfaction questions to staff surveys in order to have an ongoing measure of opinion and progress
- Ensure that any equality group has credibility and profile by providing it with 'teeth' – access to the highest levels; publicity through newsletters etc.
- Make sure there is buy-in from the highest level and that the achievement of equality goals is seen as integral to the successful performance of the BL.

##### **Gender Equality Scheme - Consider setting GES goals in the following areas:**

- Facilities: e.g. opening hours. Consider conducting a consultation exercise and cost-benefit analysis
- Atmosphere and environment: e.g. training for customer service; ongoing measurement of BL user satisfaction with 'soft' issues (feeling welcomed when visiting the Library, positive images of women's achievement prominent)

- Policy Review: review policies (as per GED guidelines), with outcomes to including clear communication and implementation strategies (relevant policies to consider include: flexitime, complaints etc.)
- Develop and agree a clear set of gender equality measurement criteria and implement ongoing measurement strategy (e.g. gender breakdown of readers, complaints, numbers of staff at various levels, equal pay, etc.)
- Consider an ongoing communications strategy that includes publishing performance results against the gender equality goals.

## 4.2 Report of the Research Findings

The Brief, Background and Context can be found in section 3.3. The results of the research findings of the external and internal stakeholder consultations carried out in February and March 2007 to support the development of the British Library's Gender Equality Scheme are as follows;

### 4.2.1 Overview statistics

Public questionnaire - 135 respondents of which 75% were women, 25% men and 7% of respondents were not the same gender as assigned at birth

Staff questionnaire - 140 respondents, of which 69% women, 31% men,

Across the 2 questionnaires less than 8% of respondents were not the same gender as assigned at birth.

### 4.2.2 Analysis of questionnaire methodology -

The response rate of 5.4% is within the average for this type of survey. There were one or two adverse comments about the some of the questions but equally there were comments indicating a positive reaction to BL actually asking about gender. The exercise was a useful awareness-raising exercise with enough responses to provide helpful baseline information on opinions and experiences. In order, however, to provide more detailed opinions, or to be able to compare responses over time, future involvement exercises could involve, maybe, several, shorter, more targeted questionnaires aimed at specific groups (see recommendations).

### 4.2.3 The Focus Groups

**Planning** - Three focus groups were originally planned where the facilitation would be by a man and a woman with an option to split into two groups to enable further discussions in single sex groups. In the event, as each group consisted of several women and one man the need for a male facilitator was not considered to be essential.

**Response to the events** - in addition to the internal circulation of staff and readers, approximately 90 external organisations were contacted and asked to promote the focus groups. Despite promoting by phone only a handful of people registered for the events, which was disappointing. Interestingly, the majority of people spoken to were unsure how or what they would contribute if they did attend. It seemed a less clear topic than say a group with a disability or ethnicity focus. Some had other commitments or were committed to other consultations. Some were offered the opportunity to share their points of view with the BL through telephone conversations (public), or drop in sessions (employees) instead.

## Overview statistics –

Public focus group (St Pancras) - There were 8 members plus 3 BL representatives of which women 10, men 1, and 4 not the same gender as assigned at birth

Staff focus group (Boston Spa): there were 7 members of which women 6, men 1.

### 4.3 External General Questionnaire - Summary of Responses and Observations

DEMOGRAPHICS			
Total Number of Responses			135
Gender			
	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>	75%
	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	25%
	Not same gender as at birth	<input type="checkbox"/>	7%
Race			
	White backgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	88%
	Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	4.5%
	Black/Black-British	<input type="checkbox"/>	3%
Disability			
	Having a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	12%
Sexual orientation			
	Heterosexual	<input type="checkbox"/>	76%
	Preferring not to say (including no-responses)	<input type="checkbox"/>	7%
Religion			
	No Religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	44%
	Christians	<input type="checkbox"/>	38%
	Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism	<input type="checkbox"/>	Each at >1%
Age			
	45-54	<input type="checkbox"/>	31%
	25-34	<input type="checkbox"/>	21.4%
	35-44	<input type="checkbox"/>	21.5%

The **Question 8** items have been groups according to their importance – or otherwise – with as indicated by the respondents – each with its reference number. Where specifically relevant quotes were given, they are included here. See the full set of responses in Appendix D1. The quotes (in italics) are a sample of the responses to **Questions 9 and 10** asking for requirements and comments relating to the use of public facilities.

#### Question 8: Using public facilities generally

##### Response: Very Important/Important

- Customer services which respond positively to the needs of both men/women (8.17)
- Gender-friendly environment and atmosphere (8.11)
- Women/men in non-traditional roles (8.15)
- Complaints policy which is gender-aware (8.20)

- Anti-harassment policy which is gender aware (8.21)
  - Job adverts containing a commitment to flexible working practices (8.24)
- 'That policies actually translate into action and aren't just empty posturing or box-ticking'*
- 'Not just statement but implementation of gender/transgender-equality strategy'*

Observations - Gender-friendly customer service was the single item that attracted high ratings across the board (58% of women rating it very important; 85% of men rating it either very important, important or fairly important) which says something about how valuable gender-appropriate communication is seen to be. Women gave a slightly higher importance rating than men to the existence of a gender-friendly environment. Slightly more men than women indicated that *job adverts showing a positive attitude to flexible working practices* and seeing *women/men in non-traditional roles* are important to them.

These responses say something about the need both for policies and 'walking the talk' when implementing the policies.

### **Response: Significant Gender Differential**

- Opening hours (8.4)
- Café, restaurant and catering facilities which show awareness of particular needs (8.5)
- Locker and storage space which shows awareness of particular needs (8.6)
- Positive images of women appropriately displayed (8.9)
- Positive images of women and men equally prominent (8.10)
- Equal numbers of men and women working in different roles/levels in the organisation (8.16)
- Job adverts containing statements welcoming men, women and transgender men and women (8.23)

*'Later opening hours. Frustrating to come to conference centre event at 6.30pm and not able to get in'*

Observations - Perhaps unsurprisingly, in every case higher numbers of women than men indicated the importance to them of not just facilities such as opening hours, but also a general sense of women being welcomed, included and of equal consequence in public facilities. In fact, in some items the responses were opposing – what men felt was unimportant, women felt important (e.g. Equal numbers of men and women working in different roles/levels in the organisation).

### **Response: Not Important**

- Childcare/crèche facilities (8.1)
- Pram/trolley access (8.2)
- Baby-changing facilities (8.3)
- Special business information for women prominently displayed (8.19)

*'A lot of this is only relevant to parents of small children, which not all people are'*

*'Full access for disabled people to all physical areas and appropriate services that are disabled'*

*'I want gender-blindness, not 'women's things': I do not want it assumed that women have special needs'*

Observations - A majority of respondents rated baby/child-focussed facilities as unimportant. Maybe there is a relationship between opening hours and being able to access child-minding opportunities?

**Response: Inconclusive/Even distribution of responses**

- Commitment to equality statements displayed (8.12)
- Website and publicity displaying gender and transgender awareness (8.13)
- Website and publicity containing positive images of men and women (8.14)
- Equal numbers of exhibitions focussing on men and women (8.18)

Observations - The percentage evidence presents an inconclusive picture or records an even distribution. However the fact that in some cases opinions were split between men/women and important/not important, it may be worth examining the details of these responses. For example, a slight majority of women felt that websites should contain positive images of women, which provides corroboration of ratings under the *Significant Gender Differential* section above.

**Question 11: Using the British Library**

These responses have been grouped into three categories with an overview of the ratings recorded by respondents indicated in the observations paragraph. See full listings in Appendix D. The categories are:

- Facilities
- Atmosphere and environment
- Policies

**Category: Facilities**

- Opening hours (11.1)
- Gender equal and appropriate toilet and cloakroom facilities (11.2)
- Locker and storage space which show awareness of particular needs (11.3)
- Conference services which display gender awareness (11.12)
- Specialist business information for men / women prominently advertised (11.13)

Observations - The responses for 'opening hours' reflects the responses in this category quite accurately. For all respondents, the most common responses were 41% good and 34% no response. This can be broken down into 38% women and 50% male indicating that they think opening hours are good. - The low number of responses and the rather lukewarm agreement that the facilities are good may indicate the degree of importance individual respondents place on facilities. This is contradicted though by the importance rating given to opening hours' in the *Using Public Facilities Generally* section above.

**Category: Atmosphere and Environment**

- Positive images of women and men equally prominent (11.1)
- Gender-friendly environment and atmosphere (11.2)
- 'Commitment to equality' statements displayed (11.3)
- Website and publicity displaying gender positive images of men and women and gender awareness (11.4)

- Women staff working in non-traditional roles (11.8)
- Men staff working in non-traditional roles (11.9)
- Customer services which respond positively to the needs of both men and women (11.10)
- Exhibitions and displays focussing on women and men ((12.11)
- Recruitment and selection statements welcoming to men and women and gender aware (12.16)

*'I would like to see an equal number of women and men represented in the permanent displays of art work such as in the busts and paintings.'*

Observations - The most common responses for all the items relating to atmosphere and environment were *unaware* and *non response*. This could mean either there is no problem, or a lack of interest in gender equality as an issue, or possibly because

*'The BL (and all institutions) should treat people equally, without particular regard to their sex, gender, sexuality etc.'*

or

*'I want gender-blindness, not 'women's things': I do not want it assumed that women have special needs'*

Where 'good' or 'average' did appear, it was indicated by fairly few people, for example:

- Website: (12.7) men rated it from good (21%) to poor (6%)
- Exhibitions: (12.11) 18% of men rated it 'good' - 15% of women rated it 'average'.

### **Category: Policy Framework**

- Complaints policy which is gender-aware (11.14)
- Anti-harassment or code of practice policy which is gender-aware (11.15)

*'I am not aware of any gender specific policies and this is how things should stay. This is a positive in itself.'*

Observations - Again the most common responses were unaware and non-response. 26% of women and 26% of men rated the complaints procedure as 'average' in gender-awareness. For the anti-harassment policy there were no significant female responses while the men recorded poor (12%), average (15%) and good (18%).

### **Question 12: the BL is positive and proactive about gender equality?**

Of total respondents (other responses were either neutral or non responses):

24% agreed / 19% agreed somewhat / 5% disagreed somewhat / 2% disagreed

Gender breakdown: Males: 41% agreed / Females: unknown

*'There is nothing specific anywhere that shows gender awareness'*

*'This exercise would suggest a pro-active attitude towards gender issues'*

*'I wouldn't know and it doesn't bother me'*

*'Have not personally had a bad experience'*

*'It certainly appears to be positive'*

*'It is demonstrated both in terms of ideas (e.g. flexible working) and in practical ways (e.g. plenty of female toilets!)*

Observations - With 24% of respondents agreeing and 19% agreeing somewhat, the evidence tends to point to the fact that approximately half of the respondents had either not visited the BL, not noticed, or were just unaware of gender-related issues. Once again this may change as awareness is raised.

### **QUESTION 13: Have you ever felt uncomfortable because of your gender in any of your dealings with the BL?**

Of total respondents (other responses were either neutral or non responses): 6% yes and 77% no with;

Males: - 85% no, / one male respondent stated he had been discriminated against

Females: - 74% no / seven females stated they had been discriminated against

#### **Did you feel able to report this matter?**

87% - non- respondents / 7% - yes / 7% - no

Males: unclear response

Females: 4 women felt able to report the matter and 7 did not feel able to report it.

#### **Reasons given for not reporting:**

*'I felt embarrassed about it'*

*'I assumed they would just make the whole experience more difficult and unpleasant'*

*'I can deal with it myself'*

#### **What would make it easier?**

*'Not sure - I suppose some sort of clear ruling somewhere that staff are to be respectful of readers perhaps'*

*'Nicer, more tolerant and empathic staff who are able to understand and identify with difference'*

*'More females in senior positions of authority/role models'*

*'A clear policy on appropriate clothing to wear in the library'*

*'If men stopped thinking their opinion on women's appearance can make our day!'*

#### **Satisfaction**

5 females indicated the matter was dealt with to their satisfaction, whereas the male failed to respond to this question. Overall there were 5 respondents that were satisfied and 4 not satisfied.

Observations - 6% of the survey indicated that they had been discriminated against (1 man and 7 women) with the majority of women stating that the matter had been resolved their satisfaction and the man not indicating. The comments indicate that the main change that would have improved the situation all around was the existence of clear guidance / guidelines / procedures. Good baseline measurement for future comparison.

**Question 15:** miss-number

**Question 16: How could the British Library improve in terms of gender equality (i.e. what could we do to make things equally fair for men and women)?**

A selection of the open responses includes:

*'I really don't feel like a victim of gender inequality. I used the British Library a lot as a student and was treated as a person. I don't really think that one should be pandered to just because of one's gender'*

*'Stop harping on about gender - just treat everyone the same!'*

*'I have not been aware that there is any problem, therefore I cannot comment on ways to improve'*

*'Understand that there is not a level playing field - to make things equally fair is about redressing the balance and proactively combating Sexism and its legacy which has favoured men at women's expense. Just treating men and women equally is not enough'*

*'It would be nice to see some male dusters and female electricians'*

*'Don't take political correctness too far - ensure that all you do is focused on the best services for the public vs. ensuring that gender equality is number 1 (e.g. hire the best people for the role irrespective of gender, exhibit work that is important irrespective)'*

*'Ability to use reading rooms on Sunday might help some women who have weekday childcare issues.'*

Observations - There is a balance to be struck in developing a GES that captures the wide scope of opinions shown throughout the questionnaire – from 'there's a lot to be done' to 'political correctness gone mad' school of thought – and has credibility with the wide range of BL stakeholders.

#### **4.4 External General Focus Group**

Group membership; 8 plus 3 BL representatives, of which 10 women, 1 man and 4 not the same gender as assigned at birth

#### **Key issues and recommendations raised during the public focus group**

**QUESTION: Using public services and facilities: What works for you as individuals and what makes you feel comfortable and welcome?**

##### **Facilities**

- It was felt all facilities should be 'comfortable to use' by people whatever their gender.
- The use of toilets by people who are going through a gender transition can cause problems and so a unisex toilet is important.
- It was felt that the word 'accessible' was preferred to 'disabled' when describing a toilet to make it more inclusive.
- It is important to provide baby changing facilities in both Menes and Ladies toilets, and in the 'accessible' toilet.

##### **People**

- People (staff) and their attitudes and behaviour are very important from the moment one enters a building. For this reason it is important that there is a good

gender mix of employees in all job roles and for all employees to have a positive approach to gender equality.

### **Ambiance**

- People want to feel, when entering a building, that they are supposed to be there, and design and architecture that appeal to both genders is very important.
- The BL front lobby was thought to be rather unfriendly, as was the reception desk although the reception staff themselves were very friendly.

### **QUESTION: What is your perception of the BL regarding the gender of its staff?**

- Very important to see a good gender mix and to see women and men in non-stereotypical roles.

### **QUESTION: What is your perception of the BL in respect of its representation of women/women's achievements?**

- There was a very real concern about the;
  - lack of representation of women's achievements - the only example of women's achievements appeared to be Anne Frank.
  - way women are represented in prominent permanent displays in the naked form.
- It was strongly felt that the displays and exhibitions should equally represent the works of men and women and that the artists should also be represent a good gender mix.
- It was felt that the BL, as an influencer and promoter, should reflect and promote the richness of gender, including transgender. The BL is well placed to be a role model.
- Most exhibitions seem to be about male authors/composers/poets etc and it was felt that the British Library needs to consider this when selecting exhibition material and focus. There seemed no acknowledgement of women writers, even the most well known such as Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte etc.

### **QUESTION: Feeling uncomfortable/harassed – Definition? Experiences? How to prevent?**

- Feeling uncomfortable/harassed was defined as 'anything that is unwelcome' including being treated rudely and without respect, aggressively and exclusively.
- Regularly delivered and maintained education and training around gender issues and also about harassment was agreed to be very important for all employees of both the British Library and their contractors.
- The British Library should promote statements internally and externally that say that they will not tolerate gender discrimination.
- In the event of needing to make a complaint, people felt that they would like both an informal and formal way of addressing the issue. The complaints procedure(s) should be promoted both internally and externally, including a permanent presence within the British Library Newsletter.
- The routine monitoring of complaints was also considered to be important.

### **Recommendations identified by the Public Focus Group**

- It was considered very important for training to be provided to all employees around transgender.
- Review the British Library's representation of women's achievements. A greater respect for women would be in evidence if there was greater and more appropriate representation of women and their achievements.
- Gender equality should be mainstreamed - on the agenda of every committee and totally inclusive throughout the organisation.
- Ensure that interviewing panels are cross gender.
- Good to see people from different race and religion represented in BL staff e.g. a woman wearing a burka.

NOTE: See full focus group notes in Appendix D3.

Observations - The group recognised the importance of an organisational framework which, while providing the policies and the facilities etc., also recognises the importance of atmosphere, environment and inter-personal relationships. Some excellent feedback was given to the BL as well as some thoughtful and constructive suggestions.

#### 4.5 Researching Internal Stakeholders: The Staff Questionnaire

##### Summary of Responses and Observations

Total Number of Responses		140
<b>Question 1 – 7 Demographics</b>		
<b>Gender</b>		
	Female	69%
	Male	31%
<b>Race</b>		
	White backgrounds	97.2%
	Asian	1 respondent
	Chinese	1 respondent
<b>Disability</b>		
	Having a disability	4.3%
<b>Sexual orientation</b>		
	Bi-sexual	1.4%
	Gay	5.7%
	Heterosexual	83.6%
	Lesbian	3.6%
	Preferring not to say	6.4%
<b>Religion</b>		
	No Religion	33%
	Christians	53.5% of whom 59% were female
	Buddhism	3 respondents
	Islam	1 respondent
	Sikhism	1 respondent
	Prefer not to say	5 respondents
<b>Age</b>		
	16-24	2.1%

	25-34		16.4%
	35-44		29.3%
	45-54		36.4%
	55-64		15%
	65- plus		1 respondent

The response information has been categorised according to the most common or dominant responses – item reference numbers have been included. A selection of relevant quotes has been recorded here to demonstrate the range of opinions indicated.

**Question 8: How satisfied are you that the British Library treats men and women equitably?**

	Total	Male	Female
1 = not all satisfied			
2			
3	24%		
4 (most common response)	35%	27%	39%
5 = very satisfied	28%	36%	24%

*'Day-to-day experience. I haven't seen or heard any discriminatory behaviour in the 3 years....'*

*'The library probably does this ok but it has no proof and has resisted requests to find proof...'*

*'Some women seem to be treated in a more special way i.e. promotions, opportunities etc.'*

*'Less flexibility creeping in which is more likely to hit women'*

Observations - The most common responses were satisfied/very satisfied. The range of comments linked to these ratings, however, shows the richness of opinion existing among staff. These opinions range from *no problem*, to *women are favoured*, and to *men are favoured*. A certain amount of difference is to be expected in any healthy, dynamic organisation, and this provides good baseline qualitative information for comparison in future years. As gender equality awareness is raised, will forthcoming surveys results and opinions change?

**Question 9: Do you feel men and women at the British Library are treated equally in the following areas? -**

This table highlights the dominant responses that are statistically significant. However it must be noted that the table is more useful for purposes of comparison than dominance analysis.

MOST DOMINANT RESPONSES							
	TOTAL		NR	MALE		FEMALE	
<b>9.1 Recruitment &amp; Selection</b>							

Men and women treated equally	102	72.9%	0	33	75%	69	71.9%
<b>9.2 Remuneration</b>							
Men and women treated equally	8	61.2%	0	33	75%	54	56.3%
<b>9.3 Appraisal/ Performance Management</b>							
Men and women treated equally	100	71.4%	0	30	68.2%	70	72.9%
<b>9.4 Training &amp; Development</b>							
Men and women treated equally	103	73.6%	0	32	72.7%	71	74%
<b>9.5 Promotion opportunities</b>							
Men and women treated equally	81	57.9%	0	29	65.9%	52	54.2%
<b>9.6 Family-Friendly Policies</b>							
Men and women treated equally	83	59.3%	0	21	47.7%	62	64.6%
<b>9.7 Flexible Working/Part-time Working</b>							
Men and women treated equally	89	63.9%	0	23	52.3%	66	68.8%
<b>9.8 Equal Representation of men/women across the organisation</b>							
Men and women treated equally	97	69.3%	0	29	65.9%	86	70.8%
<b>9.9 Facilities (e.g. toilets, baby-changing, accessibility)</b>							
Men and women treated equally	104	74.3%	0	26	59.1%	78	81.3%
<b>9.10 Catering</b>							
Men and women treated equally	106	75.6%	0	33	75%	73	76%
<b>9.11 IT Services – flexible information</b>							
Men and women treated equally	114	81.4%	0	34	77.3%	80	83.3%
<b>9.12 Departmental Facilities/Support</b>							
Men and women treated equally	109	77.9%	0	32	72.7%	77	80.2%
<b>9.13 Meetings (e.g. staff meetings)</b>							
Men and women treated equally	110	78.6%	0	32	72.7%	78	81.3%
<b>9.14 Social Events</b>							
Men and women treated equally	106	75.7%	0	32	72.7%	74	77.1%

Observations - The vast majority of respondents are satisfied that staff are treated equally. Of those less satisfied, a very small percentage of females provided a negative response regarding equal treatment of women in certain categories:

- Remuneration (20.8% women negative)
- Promotion (29.2% women negative)

By the same token, there were two areas where a very small number of males felt that men were treated unfavourably which were;

- Family-friendly (29.5% men negative)
- Flexible working (22.7% men negative)

**NB;** although women repeatedly voted that women are treated less favourably – the number of respondents out of 96 is significantly low.

Interestingly, as regards transgender response options in the several categories, a very few people indicated that they thought transgender people were treated equally – but then the number of people opting to state that transgender people were treated less favourably was zero! Perhaps respondents were *assuming* that they would be treated less favourably but had little or no relevant experience. For example:

*10.13 Meetings (e.g. staff meetings)*

- Transgender men and women treated equally – only 17.1% of respondents agreed
- Transgender men and women treated less favourably – no-one choose this option.

Transgender has repeatedly scored low but whether this is a fact or because they are unaware of what should be there cannot be determined. Because of the small numbers this data cannot be seen in terms of transgender breakdown (because of ethical considerations).

**Question 11: Can you think of an occasion at work in relation to your gender or transgender status where you feel you were treated less favourably, discriminated against or made to feel less comfortable?**

	Total	Male	Female
No	69%		
Yes	18%	11%	21%

*If yes, please comment on this, e.g. how this was resolved to your satisfaction.*

*‘Used to be made to feel uncomfortable in meetings with certain senior male colleagues. Less so now after I have consistently.....’*

*‘Several incidents years ago would not be acceptable now or happen - culture has totally changed’*

*‘Patronised by line manager - treated like a little girl.’*

Observations

The problematic data transfer meant that many of the interesting comments were cut short! This is a shame, particularly as *how* the issues were resolved was often the part missing.

However, the statistic itself - 18% had felt they had been treated less favourably, discriminated against or made to feel less comfortable – is a useful baseline against which to compare future progress.

**Question 12: If you were ever unfairly treated, discriminated against or bullied at work due to your gender or transgender status, where would you go for help and advice?**

Line manager	19
HR directly	6
Line manager, then HR	14
Line manager, then TU rep	6
Line management chain	3
TU directly	13
External resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the police</li> <li>• External support services</li> <li>• my solicitor</li> <li>• External</li> <li>• to my friends</li> <li>• Depends on facts of situation. Work, Counselor, Union, Litigation - some ideas.</li> <li>• To an outside body</li> </ul>

*'In the past - Welfare, but now I don't know - most likely to seek outside help'*

*'Grievance procedure'*

*'Friends, Manager'*

*'My manager, unless they were the cause and then HR'*

Observations - Management good practice always suggests that staff should, in the first instance, approach their managers in times of difficulty. So the 19 responses indicating they would do so is encouraging – as are those stating 'line manager and then HR'. Maybe the procedure to addressing a 'diversity' issue would benefit from re-confirming and/or clarifying with staff.

**Question 13: During your time at the British Library have you directly experienced or observed unfair treatment to anyone (men, women, transgender men or women) in any of the following groups?: (Please select only those that apply)**

Group	Responses
Black or other minority ethnic	Yes: 11 respondents (Non respondents: 129)
Lesbian, gay or bi-sexual	Yes: 11 respondents (Non respondents: 125)
With mental health issues	Yes: 17 respondents (Non respondents: 123)
With learning difficulties/disabilities	Yes: 8 respondents (Non respondents: 132)
With a physical impairment,	Yes: 10 respondents (Non respondents: 132)

hearing or visual impairment	130)
Parents	Yes: 12 respondents (Non respondents: 128)
Carers	Yes: 7 respondents (Non respondents: 133)
Belonging to a particular religion	Yes: 4 respondents (Non respondents: 136)

*'Most black staff are in grades E and D'*

*'Homophobia is a particular problem in some areas of the Library. Managers should be given diversity training. I have seen discrimination against individuals going for promotion boards and have experience.....'*

*'People with mental problems allowed to sleep at desk. Managers unwilling to address problem which leads to comments / feeling of annoyance considering pay levels involved'*

*'Observed cleaners (in past) with learning disabilities teased'*

*'Gossip/spiteful jokes allowed. People with hearing difficulties regarded as a nuisance and meetings chaired without regard for their needs'*

*'Inequality in flexibility for childcare has been observed - one colleague was told to take a day's unpaid leave to look after their child while other colleagues allowed to take time off'*

*'To be fair little more than "jokes" which, in my opinion, maybe went a little too far'*

*'I can't think of any specific examples but I think matters have improved over the past 10+ years. More women in senior positions, more general awareness of issues'*

**Observations** - As is so often the case with questions about different 'groups', the responses are broadly about the group and not necessarily about the gender issues within the group. At least the issues are being raised!

**Question 14: Are you aware of any formal policies and procedures, or informal practices in employment, or in the way the British Library carries out its business, which disadvantage men and women who belong to any of the above groups?**

	Total	Male	Female
Non respondents	14 (10%)	8	6
No	85 (61%)	28	24
Yes	15	6	9
Don't know	26 (19%)	2	25

*'Parents who are at a grade higher than B who have children are disadvantaged as flexi-time is unavailable to them and therefore cannot support their children through school activities'*

*'Not allowing FWH for ALL staff'*

*'I would say that informal practices and networks can make it difficult for women to gain the experience needed to develop their careers, in particular in more technical roles'*

*'The staff hand book has a section on harassment, bullying and discrimination'*

*'What has this got to do with a questionnaire on gender?'*

Observations: There were very few non-responses to this question, which perhaps help to confirm the 85% 'No' response as a positive indication of opinion rather than a possible lack of awareness. The 15% 'Yes' could act as a useful baseline with which to measure ongoing progress.

**Question 15: What do you feel the British Library could do to promote gender equality in relation to staff and employment? Please comment.**

The open responses have been grouped into the following categories (with an example comment included). See Appendix D2 for the full list of comments.

- Flexible working practices (*'Reinstate its best practices (e.g. FWH) to make it a truly family-friendly organisation, in line with government policies'*)
- Roles of women – further investigations needed (*'Address the problem of underlying sexual discrimination, i.e. look beyond statistics, talk to staff'*)
- Childcare (*'If a woman or man leave work for a few years to look after children they should return on the same salary they would have been expected to get if they had kept on at work'*)
- Training/promoting change/policies (*'Sensitive, intelligent, non-intrusive diversity awareness courses could be held. And e-learning could be used.'* / *'Don't think anything needs to be done. Any problems I would think are down to how an individual treats someone else and I am not sure how policies can change this.'*)
- Career development (*'Perhaps a more structured approach to career development, the opportunity for secondment to different teams or work areas in order to gain experience'*)
- HR policy (*'Publicise more information giving gender statistics e.g. balance between men/women at different levels/locations, at recruitment/promotion'*)
- Research tool (*'I don't know but this sort of consultation is good to get ideas for action'*)
- North-south divide (*'The work-life balance issues caused by north and south working discriminate severely against those with family responsibilities, which tend to fall more on women than on men. Some London staff should be ashamed of the way they treat northern staff and (by implication) of the gender discrimination that they practice'*)

**Question 16: What do you feel the British Library could do to promote gender equality in relation to service delivery? Please comment.**

The open responses have been grouped into the following categories (with an example comment included). See Appendix D2 for the full list of comments.

- Work life balance (*'Better work/life balance. Library seems to be going backwards'*)
- Diversity training (*'Diversity training elements could be a part of customer service training'*)
- Other diversity matters (*'Not so much gender equality, but I don't think all of our web services are consistent with current web accessibility recommendations'*)
- Promoting gender equality (*'More recognition of female writers and researchers'*)
- Nothing/Don't know (*'Don't think anything needs to be done'*)

**Question 17: Are there any other issues you would like to see taken into account when we draft our Gender Equality Scheme?**

There were 23 responses of which the following are a selection:

- *'Paternity leave, gathering/analysing information about PMR gradings / promotions / recruitments, follow-up surveys, funding for diversity social networks, 360 degree feedback e-learning for staff who are interested in it'*
- *'Use common sense! i.e. in IT only about 15-20% of the industry is female and we see few female candidates for senior jobs. We need to make sure we attract as many qualified candidates as possible from all gender groups, but not introduce unrealistic quotas'*
- *'Ensure that childless individuals are not accidentally discriminated against in favour of individuals with children'.*

Observations - The respondent comments recorded under the last 3 questions showed good thoughtful opinions covering a range of issues and providing detailed information regarding the thoughts and experiences of staff at the BL. Grouping the comments under issue/topic headings will support the formulation of the GES objectives and for impact measurements later.

<b>4.6 Internal Staff Focus Group</b>
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**Group membership:** 7 in total, of which 6 were women, 1 man.

**Key issues and recommendations raised during the focus group**

**QUESTION: What makes somewhere a good place to work?**

- Employees being valued for the work that they do regardless of looks/creed/culture etc.
- A formal flexible working hours scheme - the employer having a positive attitude to this.
- Rewarding, good relationships, open communications on a level basis. This makes work more rewarding.
- A range of development opportunities for people who work in the organisation.

**QUESTION: What makes the British Library at Boston Spa a good place to work?**

- Flexibility – a lot of people overlook the flexible opportunities that there are within the BL.
- Flexibility of working hours is good but there was concern that this is not now being offered when recruiting grade A's and above, the offer is not there for a formal flexible working hour scheme. The Unions are opposed to this change but it is seen as an operational need.
- There is a problem with volume of work, although this was not seen as a gender issue. Concern about finding the time to take holiday and cope with the workload.

**QUESTION: what are your thoughts and opinions on 'Equal treatment regarding gender' in the BL?**

**Recruitment and selection** - More women work part time than men and it is harder for part timers to move around – jobs are advertised as whole jobs. It was felt that career development is affected by part time working.

**Remuneration** - An outdated pay system exists and because of these it means staff who have been with the BL for some time will be higher up the pay band than new people coming in to the same post.

**Religion and belief** - There is a crossover between religion and belief and gender issues – different cultures impact on how men and women behave and interact e.g. ladies wearing burkas don't want to shake hands with men.

**Meetings** - The distance between the St Pancras and Boston Spa makes it difficult for working mothers to travel between sites for meetings. An increase in video conferencing could overcome this difficulty. Since there have been two directors based on the Boston Spa site the culture has changed a bit – for the better.

**The visitors' area at Boston Spa** – This needs a more “female perspective”, softer with more plants and displays. If it was more welcoming and if more activities were offered, this would attract more people, help recruitment policies and improve the employer brand.

**QUESTION: *Feeling uncomfortable /harassed at work* - What could be done to prevent inappropriate behaviour?**

- Explain the definition of harassment and make sure everyone understands it.
- Make people aware that they don't have to put up with harassment.
- There needs to be a structure around harassment – create an atmosphere where employees feel that inappropriate behaviour of colleagues can be managed.
- Guidance would need to be user friendly and explain who you can turn to. Maybe the priority needs to be raised for producing this.
- Make it easier for employees to access policies on the intranet site and provide a private environment where they can do this.
- There is no staff hand book on all BL policies at the moment - it would be too thick. Maybe key policies should be provided in a condensed format.

#### **Priorities for change**

- Re transgender need some clearer guidance on how they deal with people during the transitioning period e.g. use of toilets.
- Guidance on harassment at work need to be user friendly and explain who you can turn to. Maybe the priority needs to be raised for producing this.

NOTE: for full focus group notes see Appendix D4.

Observations - *what makes somewhere a good place to work* and *what makes the BL a good place to work* largely coincided in the highly pragmatic ‘flexibility’. This was highly valued by the group, and recent changes to the FWT system were seen as negative and an erosion of equality good practice. The implication of much of the staff focus group discussion was that by providing a workplace framework of fair and reasonable policies, procedures and guidelines many of the barriers encountered by ‘groups’

#### **4.7 Summary**

This key contribution to the scheme from the involvement of men and women and transgender men and women both internally (employees) and externally in terms of key stakeholders, including appropriate organisations and the wider community has

proved invaluable. The Library has already used this initial qualitative data and quantitative data;

- To assist in informing and planning this scheme and the Library's development in terms of gender equality by taking weaknesses and sharing these with the different departments so that these can be integrated into action plans.
- As a basis for assessing, reviewing and monitoring the progress particularly in relation to the development and monitoring of the British Library's performance in relation to gender equality developments.
- As a basis for the beginning of sustainable involvement and how we might consider developing this at a local level in terms of the operations of the department through to a corporate approach to involvement.
- How to initiate proactive participation and begin to develop long term partnership arrangements.
- To being to look at other mechanisms or initiatives that could be explored at this level.

The Library realises it is very important to link this information to action and whilst some of the responding actions have informed the action plan, there is still a wealth of information to address and roll into the action plans on an ongoing basis from this initial involvement