

Audit Scotland Annual Report on Gender Equality

**A progress report for July 2007
to June 2008**

Introduction

This report details progress in achieving equality and diversity objectives for Audit Scotland with specific reference to our gender equality scheme and lays the platform for work going forward. Achievements are reported against the key areas of the diversity excellence model which is a measurement framework used by Audit Scotland over the last eighteen months. The following diagram shows an overview of the model.



The Diversity Excellence Model

In addition, reference is made to new work currently being undertaken in order to progress the delivery of a clear diversity strategy going forward.

Background

We have recently reported our progress on the whole equality and diversity agenda for Audit Scotland taking into consideration our work in relation to all six equality strands. However, the public sector equality duty for gender which was introduced in June 2007 requires us to report specifically on our progress on gender over the last 12 months. Therefore, this report concentrates predominantly on this aspect with reference to broader developments where appropriate.

For Audit Scotland, the legislation is only one driver for paying attention to these important issues. As a regulator of public service provision, we wish to leverage our position and take a leading role in promoting a best practice equality of opportunity and diversity approach. We have an opportunity as an employer, a public body and as an auditor and service delivery agent to the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission. Prior to the launch of the new Equality and Human Rights Commission on 1st October 2007, draft guidance for audit and inspection bodies was published by the Scottish Government in conjunction with the three legacy commissions (CRE, DRC and EOC). This was informed by the Audit and Equalities Working Group on which Audit Scotland was represented. Although the equalities landscape is continuing to change, the key principles referred to in this guidance are informing our approach and we will continue to take an active part in shaping future developments.

Audit Scotland Equality Schemes

We currently have three equality schemes in place for Race, Disability and Gender covering staggered three year periods linked to when the duties were introduced. These schemes are published on our website (About us/Corporate Publications). During 2008 we will be merging these schemes into one overarching equality scheme which covers all six equality strands (with the addition of age, religion and belief and sexual orientation) in readiness of future legislative developments. This will allow us to take account of cross strand issues (such as multiple discrimination effects). However, we are conscious that we must ensure none of the equality strands are sidelined by combination into one scheme.

Summary of activity and actions taken to date relating to gender equality

Management and Leadership

Our gender equality scheme specifically highlights our focus on mainstreaming the management of diversity by ensuring managers have the necessary skills and competence to manage diverse teams and to embrace opportunities to promote equality in the work that we do. During 2008 we have been further developing our approach to strategically managing the diversity agenda. We are building on the work of our existing diversity and equality working group (DEWG) by establishing a diversity lead, a diversity

steering group and local delivery teams. Our particular achievements over the last 12 months include the following:

Management Development Programme (MDP)

In 2007, the MDP was implemented which includes a carefully designed module which specifically deals with the promotion of equality. The legal aspects of all three equality duties are covered together with general discrimination law. The module is supported by experiential activity and delivered by external specialists. Managers are also encouraged to think about the impact of diversity and equality in their day to day work. To date, 57 managers have completed this programme. Feedback from the programme facilitators indicates that participants took a mature and corporate interest in diversity and how understanding of this could be improved in Audit Scotland. In addition, an independent evaluation of the programme by a third party organisation showed that participants felt their awareness on diversity had been raised 'to some extent'. The manager's of participants felt they witnessed an increase of awareness 'to a large extent'.

On-line Training

The majority of managers across Audit Scotland, including those with informal responsibility for staff supervision, completed our on-line training package *Managing Equality & Diversity* by the end of December 2007. The training includes interactive case studies and knowledge testing and encourages discussion with regards to the impact of diversity and equality on the work of our organisation. The average score for managers completing the training to date is 94%.

Competency Framework

During 2008 we have been redefining our competency framework and have made a concerted effort to mainstream diversity into all competencies rather than separating it out. This has allowed us to promote best practice across all relationships (internal and external) and activities such as decision-making. Although not specifically labelling gender, the behaviour indicators do emphasise taking an individual approach to understanding and responding to individual needs and we expect this would allow for different circumstances to be responded to. For example, our proposed competency on 'Reason, Judgment & Decision-Making' talks of examining matters from a number of different perspectives. Additionally, our 'Supporting & Developing Others' competency includes making reasonable adjustments to support the special needs of others including formal and informal flexible working. Our competency framework is currently being finalised and we expect to implement this later in 2008. The final output will help ensure we measure performance on delivery of appropriate individual, team and organisational equality objectives.

People

Our gender equality scheme includes provisions for how we will ensure people understand, are committed to, are involved and recognised in the effective management of diversity. Our achievements in this area are highlighted below:

Involvement

Integral to much of Audit Scotland's work is a consideration of how people are affected by public policy and practice. Impact assessment type activity has always been a part of our normal practices particularly with regard to our external work and we are now working to make this more explicit and evidenced. Internally our DEWG has been involved in the development of our gender equality scheme and has provided a useful sounding board for other activity. We have recently developed a more extensive diversity delivery infrastructure which will take our work to the next level. This will include a diversity steering group, and local delivery teams in different functional areas.

Measuring staff opinion

Audit Scotland's staff attitude survey now includes specific diversity related questions, the results of which provide valuable information for addressing priorities. We also asked all of our staff for their views on how Audit Scotland was performing in this area. Some examples of our findings in relation to gender are included in the section below entitled 'People Results'.

Training

The majority of staff have completed the on-line diversity and equality learning package which was launched in October 2007. During quarter 1 (2008), the results and impact of the learning were discussed as part of regular team meetings. The average score for staff who have completed the training to date is 92%.

A three day Customer Service training course for front line staff was delivered in November and December 2007. A key theme of the content was the concept of respect and understanding differences.

Our induction process includes specific coverage of equality and diversity including the impact of the gender equality duty.

Policy and Strategy

The Diversity Excellence Model promotes that the management of diversity is mainstreamed with a clear strategic aim communicated effectively, sensitively and implemented. Within our gender equality scheme we interpreted this into actions required and below we highlight some of our progress in this area:

Benchmarking

We have continued to capitalise on the good relationships we have with other public bodies and have gained insights into the work they are doing on gender equality which has helped inform our own practice. In addition to local councils we informally benchmark with other comparator organisations such as the National Audit Office and utilise groups such as the Public Audit Forum.

Implementing and progressing our Gender Equality Scheme

Over the last 12 months our Diversity and Equality Working Group (DEWG) have been the main vehicle for taking a co-ordinated approach across different functions. We have met regularly to discuss topical issues in relation to Gender and other equality strands. Within individual functions across Audit Scotland we have also had individuals take key responsibility for the diversity & equality impacts of key work and processes. Specific progress on tools to enable consideration of diversity & equality include the following:

- ***Project Management Framework*** - In order to ensure that we realise the opportunity to promote equality in our externally focussed work we have made consideration of equality and diversity as mandatory in developing project and study briefs. In order to ensure the right questions are considered, a guidance booklet entitled 'Building diversity and equality into our work' has been developed by a sub group within the Public Reporting Group. This has been made available across the organisation.
- ***Forward work programs (FWP)*** - There is an increasing impact focus within the FWP, with a mapping of studies to consider their impact on different levels such as improving effectiveness and quality; providing assurance and arrangements for accountability; improving economy and efficiency and improving planning and management. We also take account of the opportunity to weave in equality impact considerations.

We recognise that we have further work to do to ensure that equality impact assessment is both integral to all our activity and that a co-ordinated approach is evident across the organisation. Our revised diversity delivery infrastructure will enable us to move this forward over the next 12 months.

Partnerships and Resources

The Diversity Excellence model emphasises the need to have partnerships and resources aligned and deployed to take account of the diverse needs of all stakeholders. Within our gender equality scheme we interpreted this into some specific actions around facilities and procurement.

Facilities

In 2007 the refurbishment of one of our main offices offered an opportunity to include features which improved accessibility and gender specific facilities e.g. including a provision for nursing mothers. An audit of our other premises has also been completed and recommendations are now being taken forward for implementation. An on-line

package to facilitate workstation assessments has also been introduced. This educates staff regarding the facilities adjustments which are available to support their needs whether that is related to gender or other aspects. The provision of catering facilities has also been enhanced to ensure any special dietary needs can be accommodated.

It is also worth noting that our IT strategy now incorporates meeting diverse needs as a key principle and we have been pilot testing a wider range of equipment in 2007 so that we can support diverse needs more effectively. This includes light weight portable hardware for staff who need to move between offices (some 70% of Audit Scotland staff some of whom have physical health conditions and/or preferences which mean they would prefer to carry lighter weights.) In 2008, a survey of user working preferences and requirements is to be conducted.

Procurement

Our procurement guidance now includes equality and diversity requirements and we expect our suppliers to adopt the same standards as ourselves with regard to valuing diversity and promoting equality.

Processes

The systematic design, review and improvement of processes to manage (and leverage) stakeholder diversity is an integral part for our approach using the diversity excellence model. With regard to gender equality, our focus here has been inclusive communication processes as well as consideration of our quality framework.

Communication

Our communication approach is designed to ensure inclusivity in language and we consciously avoid gender bias in terminology used. Our complaints policy and procedure has also been reviewed. Our feedback mechanisms internally and externally also help us to identify further areas for improvement and this continues to be an area of ongoing focus.

People Results

We are keen to understand how our organisation is perceived in relation to our work on equality and diversity and make use of monitoring data and employee research for this purpose.

Employee Monitoring

Our annual equality monitoring report includes information on gender alongside other equality strands such as disability, race and age and draws on information from our staff records. We are also able to supplement this, following disclosure of additional equality information on sexual orientation, religion and caring responsibilities by respondents to the staff opinion survey. During 2008 we will also be exploring how we can incorporate transgender information into our data collection.

In relation to gender, we analyse the current workforce profile and we also look at progress through the recruitment process, promotions, appraisal performance ratings and access to training. We also analyse leavers by gender.

We take a proactive approach to further analysing any apparent trends. For example, following analysis in 2006 we noticed a trend that despite the fact more males than females applied for roles within Audit Scotland, the percentage of men shortlisted and appointed was less than the percentage of females. To explore this further in 2007, we

commissioned further analysis of recruitment documentation. No evidence of discrimination was found. Our overall analysis for 2007 shows that there is a greater balance in the number of males now shortlisted although the number appointed continues to be lower. We will continue to monitor this during 2008. In addition, the analysis highlighted the need for more consistent standards of recruitment documentation and we will take this forward during 2008.

Our monitoring shows that more women than men have flexible working arrangements. Again, this is an area we will continue to monitor to ensure there are no inequalities with regards access to flexible working arrangements.

Opinion Survey Results

In 2007 we introduced a staff opinion survey which includes some specific diversity related questions which will enable us to track opinion over time and also benchmark our results with other organisational norms. The general trend in the results from 2007 is that we tend to achieve above benchmarking norms for questions relating to our status as an equal opportunities employer, and that we provide equal opportunities regardless of gender (86% agreement). Every single question in the survey is analysed by gender and this allows us to see any differences. The general pattern shows that women report slightly higher levels of satisfaction than men.

Customer Results

Our clients and stakeholders are diverse and we are always looking for opportunities to ensure equality in our relationships and to leverage the influence we have on ensuring they, in turn, ensure equality in their service provision. During the last 12 months we have undertaken a stock take of our initial work prioritising policies and functions and we are using this as a starting point to ensure that our work for 2008 and beyond is comprehensive and well informed. We have also engaged the support of an external specialist advisor to support our business functions in fulfilling their responsibilities. A key focus for this year is the review of Best Value and we are incorporating diversity and equality factors into this work.

Society Results

We are working to implement some of the recommendations of the Crerar Review about joint working between audit and inspection agencies. We also participate in the audit and inspection group established by the Scottish Government to look at how audit and inspection bodies can leverage their influence in the equalities field.

Key Performance Results

The Diversity Excellence Model encourages us to look at the extent to which our work on diversity and equality contributes to our business results. With regards to gender, alongside the other equality strands, we will be developing our approach to measuring this and will incorporate this into our revised combined scheme.

Conclusion

A good amount of work has been undertaken during the last 12 months to eliminate discrimination and promote equality across all equality strands within Audit Scotland and with our influence on external stakeholders. We have highlighted the areas of gender specific activity as well as some of the cross strand work which is also having an effect on gender equality. Overall we have been developing our schemes and building a strong platform for our future work. In particular the implementation of our revised delivery infrastructure will ensure responsibility for delivering the diversity agenda is embedded at

all levels in the organisation and will enable a joined-up approach across the organisation.