

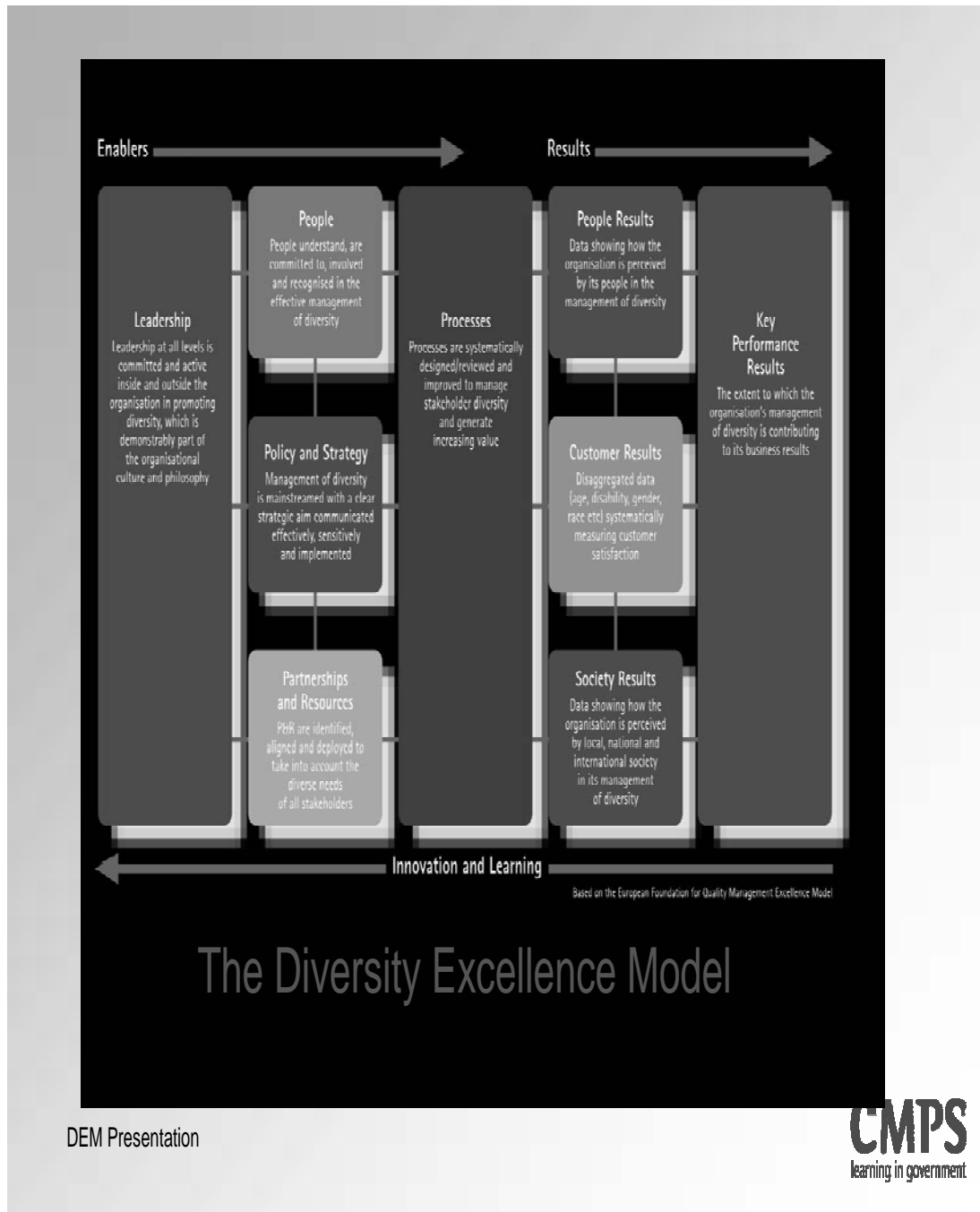
Diversity and Equality in Audit Scotland

A progress report for 2007-2008

MARCH 2008

Introduction

This report details progress in achieving equality and diversity objectives for Audit Scotland 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 in Audit Scotland over the last eighteen months. The following diagram shows an overview of the model.



DEM Presentation

CMPS
learning in government

In addition reference is made to new work currently being undertaken in order to progress the delivery of a clear diversity strategy going forward. Where progress or activity is specific to certain business areas this is also indicated.

Background

Valuing diversity and promoting equality of opportunity are seen as core best practice for modern day organisations and there is a growing awareness of the business benefits to be realised by working towards an inclusive culture. A comprehensive framework of anti discrimination legislation is now further supported by the introduction of public sector equality duties which promote a more proactive approach to addressing prejudice and discrimination in public policy and practice.

There are currently three public sector equality duties for race, disability and gender and these are likely to extend to other equality strands such as age, sexual orientation and religion and belief. The current duties place a general duty on public authorities to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment; to promote equality of opportunity; and to involve and consult people about the impact of our work in order to ensure the different needs of ethnic groups, disabled people and women and men are considered.

For Audit Scotland the legislation is just 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, 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Prior to the launch of the new Equality and Human Rights Commission on 1st October 2007, draft guidance for audit and inspection bodies was published by the Scottish government in conjunction with the three legacy commissions (CRE, DRC and EOC) and was informed by the Audit & 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

The public sector duties require us to publish equality schemes and action plans to detail our approach to addressing key issues. We currently have three schemes in place for Race, Disability and Gender covering staggered three year periods linked to when the duties were introduced. In 2008 we will be merging these schemes into one overarching equality scheme which covers all six equality strands in readiness for future legislative developments. This will also allow us to take account of cross strand issues (such as the multiple discrimination effects) whilst at the same time ensuring that none of the equality strands are sidelined by combination into one scheme.

Summary of Activity and Actions taken to date

Management & Leadership

Management Development Programme (MDP)

In 2007 the MDP was implemented which includes a carefully designed module dealing specifically with the promotion of equality. Both legal aspects and experiential aspects are covered and delivered by external specialists, and managers are encouraged to think about the impact of diversity and equality in the day to day work. As at March 2008, 44 managers have now completed this programme with another 13 having part completed it.

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 showed that participants felt their awareness on diversity had been raised 'to some extent' whereas the manager's of participants felt they witness an increase of awareness 'to a large extent'.

Online 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 remaining managers are currently tasked with completing the modules by the end of March 2008. The training includes interactive case studies and knowledge testing and encourages discussion with regard 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

Work is now well underway for the redefinition of our Competency Framework. Equalities will appear as a specific competency theme and will be woven through the whole of the competency framework to ensure we measure performance on delivery of appropriate individual, team and organisational equality objectives.

People

Impact of policies and processes

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 been happening as part of our normal practices and we are now working to make this more explicit and evidenced to ensure compliance with the equality duties. Examples of activity which aligns with impact assessment activity include.

| Type of work | Impact assessment type activity |
|---------------------------|--|
| IT services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An audit trail of the tender process exists which may help with assessing impact. • The use of the Technology Management Group enables consideration of impact across the organisation. |
| Finance & Office Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of DDA checklist in new buildings or refurbishment. • Technology Management Group as above. |
| PRG | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study brief process • Project Management Framework activities. • Impact group is already established. |
| Audit Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities and Risk Framework (on employment side) |

We will be using an equality impact assessment tool to help us consider impacts on different equality groups in a more robust way. We are currently trialling the Scottish Government's Equality Impact Assessment tool as part of the process of reviewing our approach to Recruitment and Selection which is detailed further below. Further opportunities for equality impact assessment are being identified by a revisit of the scheme action plans alongside consideration of Audit Scotland's corporate plan. For example, an opportunity in the near future is work starting as a result of the Best Value review.

Recruitment and Selection Policy Review

As a policy which affects both internal staff and potential applicants (i.e. the general public) this policy was seen as a good contender to trial the Scottish Government's Impact Assessment tool. The experience of most organisations is that for impact assessment to be effective it is often a lengthy process particularly where there is a need to seek further evidence or conduct research or consult with a variety of stakeholders as new questions or findings emerge. The amount of activity should be proportionate to the relevance of the policy to equality and with recruitment we already know there is the potential for significant impact not least on the demographic makeup of our future workforce.

To date we have been pulling together data on past recruitment campaigns; mapping the process of recruitment and how it varies for temporary and permanent staff; and identifying key stages where equality considerations are particularly relevant. This has included generating equality questions to ask of our recruitment partners and over the next few months we will be meeting with these stakeholders to explore how they can further support our diversity agenda. A key aspect of the impact assessment process is to publish our findings and we aim to do this as an interim report which we will build on as the assessment work progresses.

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 upon how Audit Scotland was performing in this area. Key results are included in the section below entitled 'People Results'.

Training

The majority of staff have now completed the online Diversity and Equalities learning package which was launched in October 2007. During Q1 the results and impact of the learning are being 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 and a key theme of the content was the concept of respect and understanding differences.

Policy & Strategy

IT provisions

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 mobility between offices (some 70% of Audit Scotland staff who in some cases have physical health conditions which affect their ability to carry heavy weights.) In 2008 a survey of user working preferences and requirements is to be conducted. This will provide further information to help accommodate diverse needs.

Facilities

In 2007 the refurbishment of one of our main offices offered an opportunity to include features which improve accessibility for people with disabilities and a number of enhancements were introduced. 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 and this educates staff regarding the facilities adjustments which are available to support their needs.

The provision of catering facilities has also been enhanced to ensure any special dietary needs can be accommodated.

Communication

Diversity and equality issues have been particularly considered with regard to the publications side of Audit Scotland's work. Following consultation with users internally and externally, the website has been rebuilt and offers different formats for users including pdf, rtf and mp3 versions of publications. The takeup of mp3 versions has exceeded expectations. For example the figures for top ten downloads for the five months to 31st January 2008 include 9511 pdf downloads and 1934 mp3 downloads (External visitors only). Improving accessibility has been a key objective and we have benefited from advice from the RNIB who conducted an accessibility audit for us. This will be revisited in 2008.

Consideration is also given to the likely needs of different audiences which enables reports to be printed in alternative formats in advance (e.g. the Western Isles audit report was produced in Gaelic as well as English.) More work will be undertaken in 2008 to develop the inclusivity of communication processes and also to continue building effective methods of consultation in support of meeting our equality duties as mentioned earlier. In addition, we will be more explicit in promoting our equality and diversity work in core publications such as the annual report.

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 will be launched in the near future. As part of the development process for the guidance booklet, individual diversity interests and areas of expertise for staff in PRG have been noted and this will enable cross-fertilisation of ideas and learning. During 2008 we will be exploring how this approach can be rolled out 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. The opportunity to also weave in equality impact considerations will be explored in the coming months.

Partnerships & Resources

External Relationships with Equality groups and organisations

We are exploring and continuing to develop relationships with external organisations to help us understand the impact of our policies and processes. We will use this facility as part of our ongoing programme of Impact Assessments.

At the same time we recognise the pressures equality groups are under to respond to all the requests for consultation they receive from public bodies, and we will ensure that our consultation is respectful of the following considerations:

- Effective consultation with equalities groups requires careful planning, making sure that there is enough time at each stage of the process.
- It is important to get beyond the “usual suspects” and take proactive steps to identify and include “hard to reach” groups which are not traditionally involved in consultation.
- It is important to recognise that the inclusion or exclusion of groups should not be based upon the numbers of individuals involved.
- In virtually all cases, the best way of identifying how to involve equalities groups in a consultation is to include them in the planning process.
- Each method chosen must be appropriate for the group involved, for example, in some cases written methods may be suitable, and in others face-to-face methods or a mix of methods may be better.
- Many equalities groups lack resources and this often affects whether they can respond to consultations. It is important to take steps to ensure that all views can be included by providing support (financial or otherwise) to allow them to participate.
- Individuals and groups who participate in consultation should be kept informed of how their input has affected future decisions and ongoing policy development.

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

Access to Training

The availability of training is now clearly explained within our Learning and Development annual report and forward plan. Staff have confirmed through our 2007 attitude survey that they have high approval of access to learning and development opportunities.

People Results

Employee Monitoring

Our annual equality monitoring report includes information on disability, gender, race and age drawing 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. However, we are limited in our analysis by the small numbers of respondents disclosing sexual orientation and religion.

Our current demographic profile is as follows (Dec 2006 data is also included for comparison):

| Current demographics as at March 2008 | December 2006 |
|---|--|
| Total staff: 294 | Total staff: 274 |
| Gender Males: 147 (50%) Females: 147 (50%) | Gender Males: 143 (52%) Females: 131 (48%) |
| Ethnicity White: 290 (98.6%) Minority Ethnic: 4 (1.4%) | Ethnicity White: 269 (98.2%) Minority Ethnic: 5 (1.8%) |
| Age < 25 = 11 (3.7%) 25-34 = 84 (28.6%) 35- 44 = 94 (32%) 45-55 = 77 (26.2%) > 55 = 28 (9.5%) | Age < 25 = 6 (2.1%) 25-34 = 82 (30%) 35- 44 = 93 (34%) 45-55 = 72 (26.3%) > 55 = 21 (7.7%) |
| Working patterns Part time = 36 (33 Female, 3 male) | Working patterns Part time = 35 (31 Female, 4 male) |

Induction

Audit Scotland's induction programme includes a specific session on Equality and Diversity where new recruits are able to learn about and discuss what equality and diversity means for our organisation. Individual knowledge is further enhanced by presentations on key legal concepts, a bullying and harassment quiz, and clear signposting to other resources such as the on-line training package.

Opinion Survey Results

In 2007 we conducted our third a staff opinion survey. The survey included 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 race and gender (achieving 83% plus agreement). However, with equal opportunities regardless of disability we have more work to do, particularly around perception as we had 61% agreement but 30% neither agreed or disagreed which may suggest there is a lack of awareness about disability and the way that needs can be accommodated. Respondents also generally felt treated with fairness and respect (80%) but were less in agreement about being treated as individuals rather than one of the crowd (64%). With regard to discrimination and harassment on the grounds of race and gender, 7 and 4 people respectively answered in a way that implies they have felt discriminated or harassed and we know we need to ensure that there are clear and appropriate mechanisms in place for individuals to raise issues if this is the case.

Also 7% of respondents have indicated they have experienced bullying whilst working for Audit Scotland and this is another area we will explore further in 2008 to determine if there are current issues.

Customer Results

We have undertaken our stock take to ensure that our work for 2008 is comprehensive and includes guidance from our retained external specialist advisor. This will benefit from the research and contacts we have managed to establish during 2007, including external contacts that represent people with disabilities to supplement our own internal involvement group.

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.

Further developing our diversity strategy

Benchmarking

We have continued to benchmark and learn from other organisations such as the Wales Audit Office, National Audit Office and the Audit Commission, including sharing and learning in respect of communication strategy and diversity and equality. We will also continue to build opportunity to learn from the experiences of a broader range of organisations and will be considering benchmarking our achievements against some national standards such as the Stonewall workplace index and Race for Opportunity.

A delivery infrastructure

Our Diversity Working Group have made significant progress over the last two years particularly with regard to putting together our first equality schemes for disability and gender. We are now looking to step up our strategic focus and have been developing ideas for establishing a delivery infrastructure for implementation in 2008 that is likely to include a diversity and equality steering group with diversity leads and delivery teams across the business. This will reinforce the fact that responsibility for diversity is shared across the whole organisation.

Conclusion

Much work has been undertaken during the last 12 months to eliminate discrimination and promote equality both within Audit Scotland and with our influence on external stakeholders. We have been building a strong platform for our future work but now recognise we need to step up activity to ensure that we truly mainstream diversity considerations in all our work.

Our key immediate priorities going forward are:

- Ensuring robust equality impact assessment are being conducted on priority policies and functions across the organisation.
- Implementing a delivery infrastructure for mainstreaming diversity across the organisation
- Introducing a combined equality scheme and updating our action plans to reflect current work priorities.