

# DISABILITY EQUALITY INVOLVEMENT

**Report on Outcomes from the  
8<sup>th</sup> September 2009 event held in  
conjunction with Capability Scotland**

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## 1.0 Introduction

Audit Scotland is committed to valuing diversity and promoting equality of opportunity for all staff, all client groups and the general public. In order to ensure that our work takes account of the particular needs and requirements of diverse groups we are keen to consult and involve a diverse range of stakeholders. Their views and opinions will help shape the way that we do business and help ensure that our practices are inclusive. As part of achieving these aims and to comply with our duty to involve disabled people in our work, Audit Scotland invited Capability Scotland's Training and Consultancy Team to support us in running involvement events with disabled people.

Our fourth consultation and involvement event was held at the Stirling University Innovation Park on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2009 and was attended by six disabled people who work with Capability Scotland predominantly in providing training, user access surveys and mystery shopping services. Most of the attendees also hold a number of other committee and public appointments representing disabled people and inputting their views to shape public practice. The group has a range of impairments and conditions including physical and sensory impairments and hidden impairments.

The event was also attended by Lorna Meahan, Chair of Audit Scotland's Diversity and Equality Steering Group, Elaine Boyd, Senior Audit Manager, Louisa Ruane, Senior Auditor and Angela Feeney, Admin Support Officer with Audit Scotland.

For our fourth event we focused on the development of a Single Equality Scheme for Audit Scotland.

Overall the event was both informative and enjoyable with everyone fully participating in a lively debate on the development of a Single Equality Scheme. Audit Scotland is grateful for the contributions made by all attendees and for the facilitation provided by Elspeth Molony of Capability Scotland.

In the months following the consultation event, various stakeholders across Audit Scotland have been considering how they can take on board the points made by attendees. This document is both a report of the event and a response to the recommendations put forward. For ease of reference, within each topic area we have separated out 'Discussion Themes'; 'Recommendations' (made by Capability Scotland) and 'Response including Actions to be Taken' (by Audit Scotland) and shown these in tabular format.

## **2.0 Recommendations in relation to developing a Single Equality Scheme**

Elaine Boyd, Senior Audit Manager with Audit Scotland, explained the organisation's plans for a Single Equality Scheme to the group. Elaine explained that Audit Scotland currently has a Disability Equality Scheme, a Gender Equality Scheme and a Race Equality Scheme. Elaine explained that a plan had been put in place for the development of a Single Equality Scheme, which the organisation hopes will enable them to take equality issues further. Elaine explained that the event on 8 September complements a staff involvement event held on 24 August and a staff survey which has just been run.

Elaine then led the group through the following questions:

### **2.1 Advice on Scheme development**

- What advice can they give us from good things seen in other's schemes?
- What are the pitfalls to avoid?

### **2.2 Visibility**

- How would you like to be communicated to about our scheme and Equality Impact Assessments going forward?
- What level of detail would you expect to be published on our internet pages – for the equality scheme and for Equality Impact Assessments?

### 2.3 Consultation and involvement

- What is an appropriate approach to consultation and involvement?
- Advice on better involvement?
- Consultation and involvement in the future?

### 2.4 Monitoring

- What advice / experience of collecting data on staff?

### 2.5 General questions

- How can we improve diversity and equality in Audit Scotland's work?
- What are your expectations of us?
- What are the key priorities that we should include in our scheme?

## 2.1

## Advice on Scheme Development

DISCUSSION THEME	RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY CAPABILITY SCOTLAND CONSULTATION GROUP	RESPONSE INCLUDING ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY AUDIT SCOTLAND
What advice can they give us from good things seen in other's schemes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is helpful to provide an executive summary of the document with key messages detailed in bullet points.</li> <li>Some people prefer Schemes to be split into separate sections covering different strands so that they can read only the section that is relevant to them, such as the disability equality section. However it appears that the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) would prefer that a more general approach is taken, with different sections referring to issues that cross across strands. This enables a joined up approach to be taken and issues relating to multiple-discrimination to be highlighted.</li> </ul>	<p>Separate key messages summaries will be produced.</p> <p>A more general approach has been adopted. There is however a section which outlines the legislative background and requirements for each of the Equality Duties.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order to rectify the above problem it was suggested that the action plan makes it clear which strands are affected by different actions and that strand-specific summaries are provided at the beginning of the document.</li> <li>• The Scheme should be reasonably short so that internal and external people read it.</li> <li>• The Scheme should be written in Plain English.</li> <li>• The Scheme should be accessible on the Audit Scotland website as a PDF and a plain text Word document.</li> <li>• The Scheme should state that it is available in a range of accessible formats.</li> <li>• Include the summary of the Scheme in recruitment packs.</li> </ul>	<p>The action plan identifies the equality strands affected by each of the action points. Strand specific summaries will be produced separately in support of the Scheme; there is a section that outlines public sector duties for each of the strands.</p> <p>The scheme is concise and focuses on the action plan.</p> <p>Plain English has been used throughout the scheme.</p> <p>The scheme will be placed on the website in accessible formats.</p> <p>We will include this in the Scheme.</p> <p>The Scheme will be included in future recruitment packs.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise that sometimes adjustments that improve access for some people make it worse for others, such as textured pavements at pedestrian crossings which are helpful for people with visual impairments but barriers for wheelchair users and people who use walking aids.</li> </ul>	A section on resolving conflicts is included in the scheme.
What are the pitfalls to avoid?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Scheme should avoid wasting space replicating the legislative requirements.</li> <li>The Diversity and Equality Steering Group should ensure that momentum is maintained once the Scheme is published.</li> <li>If Audit Scotland suffers funding cuts, do not let the work of the Single Equality Scheme be detrimentally affected.</li> <li>Avoid making conflicting claims about strands that may clash, such as LGBT equality and religion and belief.</li> </ul>	<p>References have been made to legislation however legislative requirements have not been replicated.</p> <p>The scheme will be “kept alive” through business leads providing updates at team meetings.</p> <p>We recognise the importance of diversity and equality and aim to maintain momentum in this area.</p> <p>A section on resolving conflicts has been included in the scheme.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid having the Scheme written by someone who has only got experience/expertise in one strand of equality.</li> <li>• Avoid setting unachievable targets which raise staff and stakeholder expectations but lead to disappointment.</li> <li>• Avoid using jargon, acronyms and language that only auditors understand.</li> </ul>	<p>The scheme has been developed by leads across all strands and directed by the chair of the Diversity and Equality Steering Group.</p> <p>Realistic timescales have been set in the action plan and responsibility has been allocated to deliver the action to be taken.</p> <p>Plain English has been used throughout the scheme.</p>
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## 2.2

## Visibility

DISCUSSION THEME	RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY CAPABILITY SCOTLAND CONSULTATION GROUP	RESPONSE INCLUDING ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY AUDIT SCOTLAND
How would you like to be communicated to about our scheme and Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) going forward?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give the Scheme and EqIAs prominence on your website so that people who are looking for more information can easily find it.</li> <li>• Include a section in the Audit Scotland Bulletin about the work of the Diversity and Equality Steering Group and the progress of the Scheme.</li> <li>• Develop an e-Bulletin that could go to external stakeholders providing an update on the work of the organisation. It was felt that this could have widespread benefits for improving the general public's awareness of what Audit Scotland does.</li> </ul>	<p>The Scheme will be placed on our website. Consideration is being given to adding summary details of equality Impact Assessments undertaken.</p> <p>The Diversity and Equality Steering Group have produced bulletins to provide updates on diversity and equality issues / events. These will continue to be produced as we move forward in implementing the Single Equality Scheme. Articles on Diversity and Equality have been included in our staff magazine (Abacus).</p> <p>Consideration will be given to producing an e – Bulletin as we develop our external networks.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For individuals in the Capability Scotland group, continue to communicate via Elspeth Molony at head office.</li> </ul>	Ongoing communication will be maintained with Elspeth Molony.
What level of detail would you expect to be published on our internet pages – for the equality scheme and for Equality Impact Assessments?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The whole equality scheme should be on your website, along with the action plan (this is a legal requirement).</li> <li>Executive summaries should also be provided.</li> <li>There is no need to put the development plan on the website as that is an internal document and the key parts of the development plan will be incorporated into the introduction to the SES.</li> <li>The group felt that only the outcome from EqlAs was required for the website – not the full documentation.</li> </ul>	<p>The scheme will be placed on our website along with the action plan.</p> <p>Separate key messages summaries will be produced.</p> <p>The Equality Action Plan is a key part of the single scheme and will be published on our website.</p> <p>Agreed – outcomes and key messages will be placed on the website.</p>



equality • choice • control

**2.3**

## Consultation and Involvement

DISCUSSION THEME	RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY CAPABILITY SCOTLAND CONSULTATION GROUP	RESPONSE INCLUDING ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY AUDIT SCOTLAND
What is an appropriate approach to consultation and involvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The group prefers the method of involvement currently used by Audit Scotland: face to face events facilitated by Capability.</li> <li>Participants felt that face to face events are far more effective than completing questionnaires or having telephone interviews.</li> <li>Participants felt that they benefited from discussing the issues in a group because comments made by other participants made them think of other points to make.</li> <li>The group felt strongly that it was important to receive feedback on the impact of their involvement and appreciated the feedback they received from Audit Scotland.</li> </ul>	We will continue to hold face to face events and will provide feedback to Capability Scotland.

<p>Advice on better involvement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants felt that it would be good to involve disabled members of staff too and that interest could perhaps be gauged by adding a question on involvement to the staff survey.</li> <li>• It is important that people are given the confidence to speak at involvement events and that an atmosphere of trust is created where people are not fearful that what they say will “come back to haunt them”.</li> <li>• It is important not to put people on the spot by asking individuals a specific question – it is vital that people choose when to contribute or not.</li> </ul>	<p>We will consider including a question in our next staff survey.</p> <p>Trust and confidentiality was outlined in the ground rules of the consultation event, we appreciate the importance of participating in this way.</p> <p>We will continue to adopt this approach.</p>
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<p>Consultation and involvement in the future?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the involvement sessions move to be cross-strand rather than disability-specific, there is a fear that the issues become diluted and that the most vocal people are the only people heard and therefore that only issues relating to the strand that they represent are taken on board.</li> <li>• There is a fear that the Equality Act will reduce the legal requirement to involve disabled people to one to consult with disabled people. The group were keen that Audit Scotland continue with involvement even if this were to happen and that Audit Scotland would therefore be an exemplar of best practice rather than just compliant with the law.</li> </ul>	<p>We will consider both individual and multiple strands as part of our involvement processes.</p> <p>We will continue to involve disabled people as part of our consultation and involvement approaches.</p>
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## Monitoring

DISCUSSION THEME	RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY CAPABILITY SCOTLAND CONSULTATION GROUP	RESPONSE INCLUDING ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY AUDIT SCOTLAND
<p>What advice / experience of collecting data on staff?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is crucial to explain to staff why the data is being collected and what will be done with it.</li> <li>It is important to make it clear that the data will be kept confidential.</li> <li>If the data collection is anonymous, the disability question can be phrased in terms of the social model of disability, such as:                       “Audit Scotland operates under the social model of disability. We recognise that disabled people often experience exclusion from society as a result of disabling barriers in information, communication, in policies and practices, in the built environment and as a result of other people’s attitudes.</li> </ul>	<p>The purpose of collecting information was outlined in our recent staff survey carried out.</p> <p>The importance of confidentiality will be stressed and maintained.</p> <p>We have highlighted when collecting information on disability that we are adopting the social model to support our approach.</p>

	<p>Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person? Yes/No”</p> <p>This does not give you any information about reasonable adjustments that the person might require but is suitable for the gathering of anonymous disability equality data (e.g., if just looking for how many disabled people Audit Scotland employs).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occupational Therapist forms/work station assessments could be used to capture specific information about individuals and their requirements.</li> </ul>	<p>We have followed this approach in our recent annual update forms by completed by staff.</p> <p>We will continue to monitor reasonable adjustments through the workstation risk assessment forms. In addition the annual update form issued to all staff included an option for staff to request a follow-up meeting / call with human resources to discuss potential adjustments.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants felt that the section on the annual monitoring form that refers to the HR department contacting the person might put people off disclosing an impairment on grounds that they would be concerned that the HR department would think that they could no longer do their job and would automatically require assistance. It was suggested that contact from the HR department be offered as an option if the person's needs were not being met.</li> <li>• It is important that people have an opportunity to disclose a change in circumstances relating to disability throughout the year and not just at the time of the annual monitoring form. Audit Scotland could consider building in a question about change of circumstances into supervision forms.</li> </ul>	<p>We will ensure that this follow-up process is optional in future.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to developing procedures to capture changes in circumstances.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>It was generally agreed that declaring oneself as disabled is a matter of confidence – confidence that the employer will not react adversely to the information and confidence that the information will be kept confidential.</li></ul>	The importance of confidentiality and sensitivity will be stressed in communicating with staff. All Audit Scotland staff are required to complete the Cabinet Office online training module “Protecting Information”. We appreciate the importance of maintaining confidentiality when handling sensitive information.
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## 2.5 General Questions

DISCUSSION THEME	RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY CAPABILITY SCOTLAND CONSULTATION GROUP	RESPONSE INCLUDING ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY AUDIT SCOTLAND
How can we improve diversity and equality in Audit Scotland's work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work more closely with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to ensure that public bodies are complying with the Disability Discrimination Act, especially the Disability Equality Duty requirement to involve disabled people in policy and practice development.</li> <li>• Audit Scotland could highlight examples of best practice found in public bodies.</li> <li>• Ensure that the equality and diversity audit point has equal weight with the other 18 audit points and that auditors do not just think of equality and diversity as being an add-on and less important than the other areas.</li> </ul>	<p>Our Equality Action Plan includes a commitment to continue to embed equalities in our priorities and risks frameworks for planning annual audits.</p> <p>Within the single equality scheme action plan we have committed to "supporting knowledge management developments" with a view to being better able to share equalities information in the public sector.</p> <p>The best value audit toolkits will be applied to audited bodies based on a risk assessment carried out.</p>

What are your expectations of us?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit Scotland should be an exemplar of best practice in equality and diversity.</li> <li>• You should be proactive in achieving equality rather than reactive to issues relating to discrimination.</li> <li>• You should follow best practice rather than just legal compliance.</li> <li>• You should continue involving disabled people through Capability Scotland.</li> <li>• You should try and recruit more disabled people onto your staff, perhaps by using images of disabled people in recruitment information.</li> </ul>	<p>Our Equality Action Plan includes a commitment to develop benchmarking to take account of and apply good practice.</p> <p>We will continue to approach equality in a proactive manner taking account of views from staff. Our management development and awareness raising activities should help to support this.</p> <p>We will strive to achieve best practice.</p> <p>We aim to involve Capability Scotland in involvement / consultation events.</p> <p>We have included a commitment in our single equality scheme action plan to develop our recruitment and selection processes to attract more candidates from minority groups.</p>
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<p>What are the key priorities that we should include in our scheme?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing involvement of disabled people.</li> <li>• Tackling all disabling barriers in the way Audit Scotland operates, including institutional barriers, communication barriers, information barriers, environmental barriers and attitudinal barriers.</li> <li>• Not losing momentum from the Disability Equality Scheme.</li> </ul>	<p>Disability equality will continue to be included and considered in our Single Equality Scheme. Disability specific action points have been incorporated in the action plan.</p>
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### 3.0 Accessible Information

Problems were encountered during the preparation of information for participants prior to the event. One participant required the pre-event reading in Braille and one required the information in large print. Providing Braille and large print required the PDF documents to be converted into plain text. It proved impossible to obtain plain text versions of the documents in time to have them made into Braille and therefore the participant who required Braille was not able to attend the event. Capability managed to produce large print documents in time for the other participant.

DISCUSSION THEME	RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY CAPABILITY SCOTLAND CONSULTATION GROUP	RESPONSE INCLUDING ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY AUDIT SCOTLAND
Accessible information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain copies of all documents as plain text Word documents with no tables or formatting so as to be ready to convert them into large print and Braille.</li><li>• Provide Word versions of all documents on your website as PDFs are often not compatible with screen readers.</li></ul>	Refreshed publication requirements for documents on our website will ensure the availability or access to alternative formats.



## 4.0 Next Steps

The outcomes and identified actions from this involvement event will be incorporated in the relevant project plans and equality impact assessments where applicable.

### Contact Details for Further Information:

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