



# **Registers of Scotland Executive Agency**

## **Disability Equality Scheme**

**1 December 2006**



## **REGISTERS OF SCOTLAND DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME**

### **Foreword by Keeper and Chief Executive**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a General Duty on public authorities when carrying out their functions to have due regard to the need to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people;
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act;
- eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disabilities;
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people;
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life; and
- take steps to take account of disabled peoples' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than other people.

The legislation provides a framework for us to follow in meeting our obligations under the General Duty. At the heart of this framework is agreeing a Disability Equality Scheme. The Registers of Scotland Disability Equality Scheme enables the Agency to set out how we are going to plan, deliver, evaluate and report on progress in meeting the General Duty. It also demonstrates the underpinning commitment of the Keeper and the Management Board to meeting the Agency's obligations.

We will ensure that our staff are aware of the Agency's Disability Equality Scheme and how we can work towards our goal of promoting equality of opportunity for disabled people.

The publication of our Scheme represents a significant step forward for the Agency. We will report annually on its outcomes and will review it formally every three years. We welcome any comments on the development of this Scheme.



As Keeper and Chief Executive I will be doing all in my power to ensure that Registers of Scotland, as a service provider, as a policy maker and as an employer, demonstrates the practice of promoting disability equality and eliminating disability discrimination. I consider the practical application of equality vital in our service delivery to our customers and in the employment of our staff. I am very pleased to put my name to this, the first, Registers of Scotland Disability Equality Scheme.



James Meldrum  
Keeper and Chief Executive  
1 December 2006



## **Introduction**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, places a general duty on public authorities when carrying out their functions to promote disability equality and eliminate disability discrimination.

As one of the authorities covered by the Disability Discrimination (Public Authorities) (Statutory Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2005 the Agency is covered by both the Regulations' General Duty and Specific Duty.

## **General duty**

This is the requirement on public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act;
- eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities;
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons;
- encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and
- take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.



## **Specific Duty**

To support the Agency in meeting the obligations of the General Duty, the Specific Duty requires us to undertake a range of practical measures including:

- publishing a Disability Equality Scheme that includes within it an action plan;
- involving disabled people in producing the Scheme and action plan;
- demonstrating that we have taken the actions set out in the Scheme and achieved appropriate outcomes;
- reporting on progress; and
- reviewing and revising the Scheme.

## **Agency Vision**

The Agency's vision is to be recognised as one of the most effective and efficient land registries in the world. Achieving our vision will provide Scotland's citizens and institutions with the social and economic benefits that flow from a publicly guaranteed system of rights in land and property. Our vision is being progressively realised. In support of this, we want to encourage all staff to work together as a team, to value and respect our customers, to value and respect one another whatever our role, to foster trust and integrity, to encourage acceptance of responsibility and to acknowledge work done well. The Agency ensures that all staff understand the Agency's vision and values and ensures that they are upheld.

## **Agency Function**

We are the Government Agency in Scotland responsible for compiling and maintaining records relating to property and other legal documents. Our main aim is to protect the rights of the individual



while providing public access to important legal information. The Agency administers a total of 15 different registers and our main business function is the registration of interest in land in Scotland in the two property registers (the General Register of Sasines and the Land Register). In business year 2005-2006 we processed 550,000 applications for registration, with the value of sales of land and property registered by us amounting to over £26 billion.

Individuals wishing to register their interest in land generally do so via their solicitor, therefore our main customer focus and contact is with the legal profession. However, members of the public do contact the Agency if they have a query or problem relating to land in Scotland. We have two dedicated customer service centres, one each in Edinburgh and Glasgow; these offices are open to the public and they also process letter and telephone enquiries.

Registers of Scotland is committed to the principles of the Charter Mark Programme. Our performance is monitored and measured against the Charter Mark standards and our performance against the standards is monitored and published.

### **Equality Values and Principles**

The Agency considers equality of opportunity and diversity issues to be an important focus for the Agency to develop. We aim to maintain a place of work free from discrimination and where equality of opportunity is transparent and monitored.

### **Publishing the Disability Equality Scheme**

This document and subsequent Schemes will be published on the Agency's website and intranet and staff will be informed by internal Agency staff notice. The Agency will report annually on progress.

### **Provision of Information**

All of the information we hold in relation to our registers is open to the public, who can view the registers via our Customer Service Centres



in Edinburgh and Glasgow or request information by telephone, letter, fax or e-mail. In addition, solicitors and others can access information from our main registers via the Internet if they have subscribed to our 'Registers Direct' service. We can, with prior notice, have specialist support available should any disabled customers require specialist assistance. Requests for specific services should be made in advance via the Customer Service Centres.

## **Customer Relations**

The Agency is pleased to assist our customers in any enquiry concerning our products or services. In addition to leaflets and brochures, we can also provide information in large print and on a CD-Rom or disk.

## **Feedback from Customers**

The Agency has an online customer questionnaire available for our customers to complete and send to us. This helps the Agency in the development of products and services. There is also a questionnaire that visitors to our Customer Service Centres are encouraged to complete following their visit. We also regularly seek feedback from customers using various assessment methods.

## **Agency Policies**

The Agency has policies in place to cover both the employment of staff and how we deliver services to our customers.

## **Recruitment**

The Agency's recruitment policy covers the external and internal recruitment processes. To support monitoring and reporting in each recruitment campaign information is recorded on the method of advertising, the selection criteria, disability, age, ethnicity etc.

This information is reviewed to consider whether there are any disability, ethnicity, gender or age legislation implications.



## **Retention**

The Agency contributes to the retention of staff by ensuring that its policies and procedures are equality-proofed. The Agency keeps abreast of developments in good practice and consults staff and/or their representatives in relation to policies and procedures affecting work/life balance.

## **Action Plan**

The main focus for our Disability Equality Scheme is in the employment of staff and the provision of registration and information services to our customers. The next section of our Scheme explains the work we have been involved with in highlighting disability equality and how we have developed our scheme and the objectives in our Action Plan. Please read on to see what practical steps we are taking to meet our obligations under the General and Specific duties.



## **Progress to date**

To establish a way forward for the Agency we feel it's important to record our work to date on areas of involvement and promotion of disability equality; the format of this section follows the evaluation template that the Disability Rights Commission will use to consider the contents of this Scheme. Our Action Plan is at the end of this section.

### **Part 1: Work we have done to support the fulfilment of the general and specific duties**

Policy responsibility for the Scheme rests with the Managing Director.

In recent years the Agency's main focus for disability equality has been through:

- accreditation as Disability Symbol users. (We became symbol users in March 1996 and were re-accredited in 2005);
- providing work placements with a range of organisations including: Capability Scotland, Enable Services, Moving into Work, Scottish Association for Mental Health and Bonnington Resource Centre. (A placement from this last organisation resulted in a disabled person accepting a permanent position.) Generally, placements with the Agency offer individuals the opportunity to get back into a working environment and the chance to work in specialist areas such as IT and Finance;
- using the "Two Ticks" symbol on advertisements for all vacancies, both external and internal;



- monitoring our recruitment process through our application form, which asks if the applicant is disabled within the meaning of the Disability Discrimination Act and whether any adjustments are required for assessment or interview;
- supporting staff who feel they have been subject to harassment. To do this we have two contact officers whom staff can approach if they would prefer to speak with someone who is independent of their specific section and line management. The contact officer discusses the options open to the individual and supports them in any decision the individual makes;
- ensuring all staff are aware of their responsibilities as to how they are expected to behave and interact with people by directing them to our Dignity at Work policy and offering Disability Awareness and Diversity training;
- ensuring that all managers undergo Diversity training and that our customer-facing staff have taken part in Disability Awareness training;
- publishing our policies on our Intranet so that they are accessible to all;
- providing a development training programme open to all staff;
- promoting (i) the Agency's Vision and Values statement that encourages us to value and respect one another and (ii) the Agency's Performance Management System that reminds us of our responsibilities when working with others, both colleagues and customers;

- making reasonable adjustments for any member of staff experiencing difficulty in getting to work or carrying out their work activities. (We ensure that their particular circumstances are assessed internally and they may also be referred to our Occupational Health provider, Access to Work, or a particular health professional. After gathering all the required information the Agency is better able to determine what reasonable adjustments may be appropriate. This might include, for example, offering the opportunity to work from home for part of the time, software/hardware enhancements or a change of role); and
- participating in relevant organisations such as Lend (Lothian Employers Network on Disability) and the Employers' Forum on Disability.

## **Part 2: How we have involved disabled people who have an interest in the development of the Scheme**

To develop our Scheme we formed a Disability Forum. The Forum has ten disabled members of staff and is co-ordinated by one of the Agency's Disabled Persons Officers. The members of the Forum were selected to represent a range of disabilities, work areas and roles. The Forum began with a training session from Capability Scotland. This provided a background to the DDA, a recap on the social model and how to develop a Disability Equality Scheme. The Forum's meetings to date have focused on issues to include in our Action Plan. The Forum will monitor progress of the Action Plan and explore issues for year two of the Action Plan. We see our Scheme as a living document and as such there may be objectives inserted or changed before we report formally at the end of year one.



To date we have found it difficult to engage with our external customers in the development of the Scheme. We have objectives in year one of the Action Plan to address this. As mentioned in our introduction our main customer base is the legal profession and we have been in contact with the Law Society for Scotland to engage with any Advisory Group that they may have. The Law Society has been in consultation with their members and has recently advised us that they have an Equality Advisory Group. Consequently, one of our objectives is to establish contact with this group. The Action Plan also contains actions to increase our engagement with the general public.

The development of our Scheme will impact on resources both in terms of allocating priorities, and resources required to undertake specific pieces of work; this will be fully worked out and then built into our Business Plans over the next three years. This will be reflected in our Business Plan for 2007–2008.

### **Part 3: How we gather evidence**

The Agency undertakes a range of activities to gather information on disability and other equality matters. Our activities include:

- obtaining feedback from staff on how policies and procedures impact on them;
- monitoring external and internal recruitment to ensure the elimination of discrimination that is unlawful under the Act. The Agency monitors the number of applications received, the number invited to assessment, the assessment outcome, and the outcome of the interview process. At each stage we have data on disability, ethnicity, gender and age. We report internally and provide details to Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS);



- working with PCS under partnership arrangements in our joint Diversity Working Group.

#### **Part 4: The steps we propose to take towards the fulfilment of section 49a (1) duty – the Action Plan**

Our Action Plan will record:

- the objectives we set;
- the specific activities we intend to carry out;
- the milestones that we intend to reach;
- the Directorate with responsibility for the outcome;
- the timeframe we plan to work to; and
- the progress we intend to make.

Our Action Plan will also state the date the plan was last updated so interested parties can determine the currency of the information.

We will report annually on outcomes and any subsequent action for the following year.

In pursuit of our objectives a working group representing the major contributors to the Action Plan will meet to confirm progress and determine any impact on other areas of business or other Agency initiatives such as Charter Mark, Investors in People etc. We anticipate that this working group will consist of staff from Human Resources, Facilities Management and Customer Relations.

It is essential that the Agency has robust information to plan for the future. We hope the publication of this Scheme provides staff with more information and that it encourages staff who have a disability to declare if they have not already done so. This helps ensure that we can support them in the best way we can and also helps in the development of IT system enhancements, planning the working environment, assessing specialist support, opening up remote working etc. We will also be able to allocate appropriate resources and provide training opportunities to ensure staff are trained in appropriate areas such as Health and Safety, evacuation and first aid.

## **Procurement**

The procurement activities of public bodies are highly regulated (EU Treaty, specific EU Directives on procurement and jurisprudence from the European Court of Justice and the national courts), which means that such bodies are obliged to ensure that they act in a transparent and proportionate manner ensuring equal treatment and non discrimination in all their activities. In essence, this means that good procurement practice is fundamentally about treating potential suppliers equally and awarding contracts on the basis of merit following fair and open competition wherever possible. In this respect, good procurement practice is therefore consistent with equality policies.

We are currently awaiting the Scottish Executive's guidance document for the public procurement community in Scotland highlighting the extent to which social issues including disability equality can be incorporated into procurement processes

The Agency accepts that as a major procurer of goods and services it has to ensure that those who are contracted by us do not compromise our duty to promote disability equality when carrying out services to the public on our behalf.

The Agency will amend its standard set of terms and conditions to include a clause stating that contractors shall not unlawfully discriminate with regard to disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, race or religion.

We require potential contractors for significant contracts to disclose any adverse judgements/rulings and have published guidance for suppliers on our procurement website that warns that failure to comply with legislation may result in them being excluded from bidding.

### **Staff Responsibilities**

All staff have a responsibility to ensure that access and work areas are clear for staff to move around safely and that they know who to contact to move equipment etc to clear routes of access. All staff also have a responsibility to make managers and or colleagues aware if there is anything that is making it difficult for them to work and engage to their full potential.

### **Part 5: How we intend to report and move forward**

The Agency will:

- report annually on the implementation of this Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan;
- update the Action Plan as the scheme progresses to ensure momentum is maintained;
- continue to support and work with the Disability Forum;
- use the information gained from work on the Disability Equality Scheme to inform the Agency's wider policies and business practices; and

- publish updates to staff on the Intranet, including any feedback we get from staff and the public on the Scheme.

### **Part 6: How we will assess the impact of policies and practices or the likely impact of proposed policies and practices on equality for disabled people**

The Agency will undertake an Impact Assessment of its policies and will record the evaluation process and the steps we have taken. The Scottish Executive has issued guidance on Impact Assessment and the Agency will explore whether we adopt the same process. We will ensure that the method used will also become part of our procedures for the development of new policies and we will also ensure that Programme and Change Office, who contribute to the development of processes and procedures in the Agency, are also aware of the process we are using to Impact Assess. This might include the drafting of specific questions for them to ask as they develop procedures and consider the impact on User Acceptance Testing of new systems and new ways of working. We will examine ways how we can internally validate the impact assessment process we adopt.

### **Part 7: Publication of the Disability Equality Scheme**

The Scheme will be published on the Agency's Intranet and on our external site at [www.ros.gov.uk](http://www.ros.gov.uk). To mark the launch of the Scheme we are hosting Disability Awareness Days for our staff in our offices in Edinburgh and Glasgow for staff to attend.



**Part 8: Concluding comments and recommendations for future action:**

We see the publication of the Scheme as a beginning and not an end: we intend to mainstream equality of opportunity for disabled people into everything that we do. We will record our successes and highlight areas where we can make a difference. We welcome suggestions from staff, the people who use our services and disability professionals on how we can succeed in our goal of promoting disability equality and eliminating disability discrimination.



## Registers of Scotland Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan

Date of publication: 1 December 2006

Date last updated: 1 December 2006

### Human Resources Directorate

(Incorporating Personnel, Training & Staff Relations)

Year 1

Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
To Assess Impact on Agency policies	Select appropriate methodology	30 April 2007	
	Establish procedures and guidelines	31 May 2007	
	Mainstream guidelines into the development of new policies	1 June 2007	



Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
	Issue guidelines to Agency Project Managers so they can import guidelines into Prince Management procedures	1 June 2007	
	Impact Assess four HR policies	31 October 2007	
Review outcomes from Recruitment process and report to HR Director	Record all relevant information for monitoring purposes	31 December 2007	
Create Disability Equality Site on Agency Intranet (with support of Disability Forum)	Launch site  Re-Launch Two Ticks Symbol  Publish Good News Stories  Publish examples of	30 March 2007	



Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
	<p>adjustments we have made</p> <p>Develop &amp; publish Frequently Asked Questions</p> <p>Develop points of contact and support both internally &amp; externally</p>		
Ensure Agency contact details are up to date	Names and locations of First Aiders, Evacuation Chair volunteers	31 January and each month thereafter	
Ensure sufficient numbers of First Aiders, Evacuation Chair volunteers are provided			
Ensure staff with access issues have up to date personal emergency egress plans (Peep) and that	Staff with Peeps will be made aware of their responsibility to inform Staff Relations of any change in their	31 May 2007	



Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
these are reviewed every six months	requirements		
Explore options for the default font size for Agency paperwork and IT Network desktop to be increased (with support of Partnership Management)		31 March 2007	
To provide all CSC and HR staff with Disability Awareness Training		31 May 2007	
Provide training to managers on Disability awareness & Health & Safety		30 June 2007	
Confirm all disabled staff have equal access to training and that training records can capture this information (with support of BT, our IT	Discuss options with BT and HR (Records)	28 September 2007	



Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
partners)			
Explore options for secure storage of essential medication (with support of the Disability Forum)		31 March 2007	
To review progress and prepare feedback for the 6 month review		15 May 2007	
Ensure any objectives in this Scheme that impact on business activities are recorded in the Agency's Business Plan		15 January 2007	

## **Human Resources**

(Incorporating Personnel, Training & Staff Relations)

Year 2

Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
Review outcomes from year 1 and identify actions for this year		1 December 2007	
To complete the		31 October 2008	



Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
Impact Assessment of remaining HR policies			
Update Disability Equality Site on Agency Intranet		31 October 2008	
Look at further Disability Awareness Training for staff		30 July 2008	
Review outcomes from Recruitment campaigns and report to HR Director	Record all relevant information for monitoring purposes	31 December 2008	
To review progress and prepare feedback for the 6 month review		15 May 2008	
Ensure any objectives in this Scheme that impact on business activities are recorded in the Agency's Business Plan		15 January 2008	



## Human Resources

(Incorporating Personnel, Training & Staff Relations)

Year 3

Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
Update Disability Equality Site on Agency Intranet		31 October 2009	
Review outcomes from Recruitment campaigns and report to HR Director	Record all relevant information for monitoring purposes	31 December 2009	
To review progress and prepare feedback for the Managing Director's 6 month review		15 May 2009	
Ensure any objectives in this Scheme that impact on business performance are recorded in the Agency's Business Plan		15 January 2009	



**Information Office Directorate**  
(Incorporating Customer Relations and Marketing)  
Year 1

Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
Progress training for all Customer Service Centre (CSC) staff in handling enquiries from disabled customers (with support of Training Section)		31 July 2007	
Review contents of the CSC Questionnaire and include questions about accessing our services and participation in market research (with support of the Disability Forum)	Review information provided, and respond to comments	31 January 2007	
Enable our CSC customers to complete CSC	Record and respond to feedback	13 July 2007	



Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
questionnaire online			
To establish contact with the Law Society of Scotland's Equality Advisory Group to discuss how the profession transacts and communicates with the Agency		31 May 2007	
Produce large print version of our Multi – Language Information leaflet		31 March 2007	
Evaluate the effectiveness of the signage within the CSCs (with support of Facilities Management)		31 May 2007	
Complete an access audit of the Agency's external web site	Arrange for external accreditation	29 June 2007	
Review layout of the	Install new seating to	29 June 2007	



Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
customer area in George Square CSC & provide new seating in both CSCs (with support of Facilities Management and the Disability Forum)	offer a variety of options to our customers Review location of terminals for easy access for customers		
Explore options for establishing links with representatives of disabled groups	Progress with our Market Research Company	30 November 2007	
To review progress and prepare feedback for the 6 month review		15 May 2007	
Ensure any objectives in this Scheme that impact on business activities are recorded in the Agency's Business Plan		15 January 2007	



**Information Office Directorate**  
(Incorporating Customer Relations and Marketing)  
Year 2

Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
Ensure any objectives in this Scheme that impact on business performance are recorded in the Agency's Business Plan		15 January 2007	
Review contents of the CSC questionnaire to assess the capture of appropriate information		31 January 2007	
To review progress and prepare feedback for the 6 month review		15 May 2007	
Explore options for research following analysis of CSC questionnaire	These will be held when there's a sufficient number of participants selected from customers to our CSCs and our	30 September 2008	



Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
	external exhibitions		

### Information Office Directorate

(Incorporating Customer Relations and Marketing)

Year 3

Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
Ensure any objectives in this Scheme that impact on business activities are recorded in the Agency's Business Plan		15 January 2009	
To review progress and prepare feedback for the 6 month review		15 May 2009	

### Finance & Planning Directorate

(Incorporating Facilities Management and Procurement)

Year 1

Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
Ensure access issues in our shared	Discuss with the Disability Forum	30 July 2007	



Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
accommodation buildings is raised with our Landlords (with support of the Disability Forum)			
Ensure common access areas are clear and unrestricted		Ongoing	
Evaluate the effectiveness of the signage within the CSCs (with support of Customer Relations)		31 May 2007	
On receipt of guidance from the Scottish Executive on how to incorporate disability equality into the procurement process we will review our procedures to ensure they commit our suppliers to comply with all relevant		Date will depend on when guidance is received	



Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
equality legislation			
To review progress and prepare feedback for the 6 month review		15 May 2007	
Ensure any objectives in this Scheme that impact on business performance are recorded in the Agency's Business Plan		15 January 2007	

**Finance & Planning Directorate**  
(Incorporating Facilities Management and Procurement)  
Year 2

Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
Ensure any objectives in this Scheme that impact on business performance are recorded in the Agency's Business Plan		15 January 2007	



To review progress and prepare feedback for the 6 month review		15 May 2007	
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**Finance & Planning Directorate**

(Incorporating Facilities Management and Procurement)

Year 3

Objective	Milestones	Target Date	Progress
Ensure any objectives in this Scheme that impact on business performance are recorded in the Agency's Business Plan		15 January 2009	
To review progress and prepare feedback for the 6 month review		15 May 2009	