

REGISTERS OF SCOTLAND - EQUALITY REPORT DECEMBER 2010

Registers of Scotland

Registers of Scotland is responsible for compiling and maintaining registers relating to property and other legal documents. Our main aim is to record and safeguard rights whilst providing open and efficient access to important information. We hold 16 registers – the largest are two property registers (General Register of Sasines and the Land Register). The smaller registers are grouped together under the collective name of the Chancery and Judicial Registers.

Our staff are located in both Edinburgh and Glasgow. We have four buildings including two dedicated Customer Service Centres. These deal with public enquiries as well as email, letter and telephone enquiries. We are committed to the principles of the Customer Service Excellence Programme and our performance is monitored and measured against this Government standard.

Background

As part of the Civil Service, we follow the Civil Service Code and have clear values as part of our culture that actively promote equal opportunities and diversity. While we recognise and comply with legislation, our main focus has been to make these our key business drivers and adopt them as an everyday part of our approach to business.

This report summarises our activities in relation to our Equality Scheme which includes Disability, Gender and Race. This annual report highlights our actions under the individual equality schemes for Disability, Gender and Race. This report allows our staff, customers and stakeholders to see how we have performed in these important areas.

Equality Values and Principles

We aim to maintain a place of work free from discrimination and where equality of opportunity is transparent and monitored.

Policies

We have committed to carrying out impact assessments as part of our approach to delivering our policies, and plan to use this tool to review all policies and practices as they are refreshed. The Equality Impact Assessment allows us to consider how our policies (including activities, functions, strategies, programmes, and services or processes) may impact, either positively or negatively, on groups or individuals in relation to one or more of the equality strands.

The impact assessment looks at the following key areas:

1. **Policy** - a clear definition of the policy and its aims.
2. **Collecting evidence** and **engagement** with equality groups.
3. **Differential Impact** - reaching an informed decision on whether or not there is a differential impact on equality groups, at what level and what you will be done to address any adverse impact.
4. **Measuring outcomes** - stating methods for monitoring and evaluating the policy to ensure that it is continuing to achieve the expected outcomes for all groups.

Our People

In the financial year 2009-10 our staffing level averaged 1,295. This included 279 part-time staff and amounted to 188.94 full time equivalents. In terms of the DDA definition 7.3% of staff declared themselves disabled, of these 40% were female and 2% of staff, who were willing to declare, were of black or ethnic minority origin.

Recruitment

Our recruitment policy is designed to ensure that recruitment is open and fair with selection on merit in accordance with the recruitment code set down by The Civil Service Commissioners. This is subject to annual external scrutiny and we were assessed as meeting those requirements in 2010. To support monitoring and reporting in each recruitment campaign, information is recorded on the method of advertising and the selection criteria used. Statistics are kept for all applicants at each stage of the process regarding age, disability, ethnicity and gender. This information is reviewed to consider whether there are any age, ethnicity, disability or gender legislation implications.

Trawls

In business year 2009-10 we carried out 12 internal trawl campaigns and 8 external recruitment campaigns.

Retention

We keep abreast of developments in good practice and consult staff and/or their representatives in relation to policies and procedures affecting work/life balance. RoS are continuing to issue an exit survey for staff leaving the organisation. Feedback provided from the survey is used to analyse trends and improve future retention.

Pay Equality

We are currently in a three-year pay deal and this includes further simplification of our grading and pay structures, shortening of pay bands and rationalising allowances/pay supplements. We have reviewed and evaluated our pay and reward systems, and no equal pay issues have been identified. We will continue to monitor and audit our policies and systems to ensure gender pay inequalities do not arise.

Diversity in RoS

The Civil Service Strategy 'Promoting Equality, Valuing Diversity' was launched in July 2008 and is a key building block in the future vision for the Civil Service. It focuses on four main themes: behaviour and culture change; leadership and accountability; talent management, and representation. It reflects the drive to bring equality and diversity into every aspect of the business of Government and so enable the delivery of world-class public services.

Diversity in RoS means employees will be respected and valued for who they are and what they contribute, regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or transgender status - in fact, regardless of anything to do with what they look like or what their background is. The manager's role is to lead by example, encourage and enhance the team by exploring and using all the team's talents. The term 'Managing Diversity' is now being used widely and forms part of the Government's Modernising Government agenda. It broadens the concept of equal opportunities beyond the issues covered by law, and focuses on organisations recognising and valuing people as individuals.

We have been engaged with Haven Products since the first quarter of 2008. They are a DWP/JCP 'Workstep' contract holder. Their purpose is to create and sustain meaningful employment and development opportunities for disabled people. They trade commercially with a range of blue chip organisations and operate from three modern factories across Scotland, as well as operating an innovative complementary workforce model which RoS has benefitted from. RoS currently has 11 Haven employees. 2 Full time and 9 part time employees.

International Consultancy Group (ICG)

The ICG manages all forms of international liaison, such as general visits from representatives from other Land Registration organisations, approaches from organisations and individuals for information about the Scottish system of land registration, and requests for support for international project activities or, more recently, leading international projects.

Our involvement in the international arena commenced in 1996, when we acted as advisors to the Isle of Man government in relation to the computerisation of their land registration activities. Since then, the ICG has been involved in numerous land administration projects world-wide, including projects in Abu Dhabi, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Croatia, the Republic of Georgia, Ireland, the Kyrgyz Republic, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malta, Poland, Russia, Serbia, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Albania, Kosovo and Thailand. We provide a variety of expertise to such projects, and select experts from a wide range of RoS staff.

Our International Consultancy Group have continued to undertake projects overseas as well as host study tours for visiting parties. The group has worked on public awareness projects related to land registration in Albania and Kosovo during 2009-10 which will continue into the coming year. Both projects were funded by the World Bank. RoS also hosted a week long Study Tour with delegates from Ugandan Government and a visit from surveying students Aalborg University of Denmark. RoS has also initiated a development project with the Ministry of Lands, Housing, Physical Planning and Surveys of Malawi. A scoping visit took place in Malawi and a Memorandum of Understanding has been drawn up which details the planned areas of co-operation. A Scottish Government charity 'Challenges World Wide' will act as advisors on cultural and equality issues in Malawi. Our staff working in the International Consultancy team continue to use Government bodies and research to ensure they have familiarised themselves appropriately with the relevant culture and protocol of our international contacts.

Provision of Information

Much 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 or request information by telephone, letter, fax or email. In addition, solicitors and other professional bodies can access information from our main registers via the internet if they have subscribed to our 'Registers Direct' professional users service. Any customers using our Customer Service Centres who are disabled or not confident in the use of spoken English, can have access to appropriate assistance, e.g. an interpreter, to assist with their enquiry. Requests for this service (which is normally provided at no additional cost) can be made via the Customer Service Centres. In addition, our multi-language leaflet contains information in Gaelic, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Punjabi and Urdu. Our general information leaflets can also be supplied in other languages upon request. This service is free of charge. We publish an extensive range of literature on the products and services that we offer. All leaflets and brochures can be provided in other formats, including CD-ROM, audiocassette or in Braille. The information can also be provided in other languages on request. In addition, we welcome requests from community groups and organisations to find out what we do and what information we can provide.

Consulting our Stakeholders

We have introduced an annual staff survey and additionally we seek engagement with our customers and stakeholders through focus groups and customer feedback questionnaires. This research programme includes an online and telephone questionnaire, mystery shoppers and an external review. Our Customer Service Centre questionnaire asks for details relating to customers' ethnicity, disability and whether the individual would like to be part of a customer focus group.

Complaints

Members of staff who feel that they have experienced discrimination can make a complaint through the grievance procedure. Additionally, we have a Dignity at Work policy and a Whistleblowing policy; this extends the protection for employees who want to report bad practice without fear of being victimised as a result. We take all complaints seriously and do not tolerate any form of discriminatory behaviour.

Customers and stakeholders who feel that they have experienced discrimination in the way we have treated them can make a complaint through the Complaints Procedure. Our Putting Things Right procedure is available in leaflet form at our Customer Service Centres and available on our website. During the last year there were no discrimination grievances raised, nor any customer complaints made regarding equality issues.

Action Plan

Our action plan captures how we have and will continue to support the requirements and essence of all three of the equality schemes. The individual Equality Schemes' Action Plans and annual reports are published on the RoS intranet and on the website at www.ros.gov.uk.

Equality Schemes

New Single Equality Duty

The Scottish Government is currently consulting on detailed proposals for the new Public Sector Equality Duty, including draft regulations for the new Specific Duties.

Background

The Equality Act 2010 replaces the 3 existing duties with a single Equality Duty. This new duty also extends to age, religion and belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and pregnancy and maternity. It is expected to come into force in April 2011. Until then the requirements of the existing race, disability and gender duties will remain in force.

Like the 3 existing duties, the new single Equality Duty is in 2 parts – a general duty, which is set out in the Equality Act 2010; and specific duties, which can be placed on certain public authorities to ensure the better performance of the general duty. It is for Scottish Ministers to determine the specific duties that should be placed on Scottish public authorities.

1. Disability Equality Scheme

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.

We are covered by the Disability Discrimination (Public Authorities) (Statutory Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2005.

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

Registers of Scotland is currently awaiting the regulations for the new Specific Duties.

2. The Gender Equality Scheme

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 as amended by the Equality Act 2006, places a statutory duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment; and
- promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

We are covered by both the Regulations' General Duty and Specific Duty.

General Duty

As well as having to have due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination and harassment, and to promoting equality of opportunity between men and women, the general duty includes the need to have due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination and harassment against transsexual people in the fields of employment and vocational training (including further and higher education).

The general duty covers all public authorities, and applies to all their functions including employment, budget setting and procurement, by setting the framework within which the organisation will deliver its services. Meeting the requirements of the general duty is a statutory obligation.

Specific Duty

Registers of Scotland are currently awaiting the regulations for the new Specific Duties.

3. Race Equality Scheme

The Race Relations Act 1976, as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, places a general duty on public authorities to promote race equality. Consequently we are bound by this legislation to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; and
- promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

Race Equality Strategic Aims

We aim to increase the level of awareness of our functions amongst black and ethnic minority communities in Scotland. We also aim to increase the levels of black and ethnic minority staff at all levels of our organisational structure.

Race Equality Targets

2.3% of our staff have declared they are from a black or ethnic minority group, against an original target of 1.7%. This figure shows an increase in the number of black and ethnic minority staff we have; this increase has been achieved through recruitment where more black and ethnic minority staff have chosen to join us and also in working in association with our Trade Union - PCS, to encourage more staff to accurately declare their ethnic group. Our Race Equality target for the employment of staff will be re-assessed when the results of the next census becomes available.

2009-10 Review

Duty as an Employer		
Function or policy	Action	Progress
Recruitment		
	Increase the proportion of applications at all levels from members of the black and ethnic minority communities, and disabled people who have the essential skills, so we achieve diversity targets that reflect the Scottish Census.	Ongoing

	Ensure all job advertisements contain only the necessary skills and abilities required for the vacancy, to ensure equality of opportunity.	Achieved
	Encourage all staff and job applicants to complete an ethnic monitoring questionnaire. Specify on the form the reasons why the completion of the questionnaire is important.	Ongoing - Applicants require encouragement to complete the form
	Enhance training of interview panels to ensure all staff involved in recruitment and selection are properly trained in diversity issues, and to ensure that skills are kept up-to-date.	Ongoing – this forms part of the interview skills training provided to panel members
	Record all relevant information for monitoring purposes. Review the outcomes from the new procedures for generic assessment centres and obtain feedback from staff and managers on this new approach.	There is currently a recruitment freeze.
Developing People		
	Implement monitoring of internal training to evaluate ethnic minority staff's involvement in learning opportunities. We aim to develop an online tool to replace the current manual check. Confirm all disabled staff have equal access to training and that training records can capture this information.	Ongoing
	To ensure Diversity Training contains relevant aspects on gender equality and for it to be available for managers and staff.	Diversity training for Managers and Staff was completed in April 2009. From April 2010 Managers have attended Employment Law workshops which cover diversity.
	Develop current information on Diversity and Equal Opportunities on the Intranet.	The HR intranet is currently under review and information will be updated on receipt of the new Specific Duties.

	Ensure appropriate material on Diversity and Equal Opportunities is available in the Open Learning Zone	Ongoing
	To provide staff with training on how best to use the functions within Microsoft Word in how to make adjustments to their font size	Ongoing
	Provide training to staff on Health & Safety awareness	Ongoing
Managing Performance		
	Part of our Performance and Development System is our Competency Framework. It specifically mentions trusting and respecting colleagues and complying with equality and diversity issues. This ensures that staff are aware of what is expected of them. These commitments are brought to the attention of all staff when they join us and are regularly assessed.	Management and staff training was undertaken throughout November 2009 and is ongoing as required.
	To ensure that there is a continuous process of performance and development management throughout the org using the plan, do, review cycle. Outcomes are agreed, development requirements are debated and agreed and overall performance is reviewed with a view to the future	Introduced through management and staff training programme Oct 2009, ongoing workshops with managers/individuals, development survey Dec 2010.
	To ensure that Equal Opportunity and Diversity issues are appropriately managed in line with RoS' policies and procedures.	Ongoing
Monitoring staff		
	To set employment monitoring practices to improve the quality and use of data.	In place, with action ongoing
	Review outcomes from recruitment activity and report to HR Manager	Ongoing
	Record all relevant information for monitoring purposes	Ongoing

	Review outcomes from internal promotions and report to HR Manager	Ongoing
Reviewing and Implementing People Policies		
	To establish procedures and guidelines to equality impact assess all policies and procedures	Ongoing
	Ensure that equality and diversity issues are an integral part of any review of policies and procedures. Mainstream equality impact assessment into the development of new policies	Ongoing
	Develop a 'parent pack' for expectant mothers and new fathers	Ongoing
	To explore the options of agile working (e.g. home working) on gender equality	The agile working project continued into 2009-10 and is still ongoing.
	Develop a carers forum and parents forum where employees can meet to discuss issues and receive support on areas that affect them. Set up a maternity/paternity mentoring scheme where expectant mothers/fathers can receive advice and experience from mothers and fathers.	Human Resources currently working on this. To be launched in April 2011.
Miscellaneous		
	Ensure First Aiders contact details are up to date and consider provision of this service within any new accommodation we might acquire.	Ongoing
	Ensure staff with access issues have up-to-date Personal Emergency Egress Plans (PEEP) and that these are reviewed every six months.	Ongoing

	Explore options for the default font size for paperwork and IT Network desktop to be increased (with support of Partnership Management Team)	Ongoing
	Ensure any objectives in the Equality Scheme report that impact on business activities are recorded in the RoS Business Plan.	Business Planning ensure that business activities are aligned to the Equality scheme objectives.
	To engage with Haven Products regarding the possibility of their employees running and maintaining a staff lounge	Work is currently underway to set up the staff lounge.

Employment Monitoring Scheme				
Process	What we already do	How we measure equality outcomes	Improvements/changes planned	Progress
Monitoring the ethnic origin of staff	Report our progress towards our diversity targets to the RoS Board on an annual basis. The overall percentage figure is published in our annual report.	Monitoring data and analysis of staff are reported by grade.	HR will work together with PCS to encourage all staff to disclose their ethnic origin.	Ongoing

Provision of Services and Information		
Function or policy	Action	Progress
Compiling and maintaining public registers & providing information from public registers	We advertise on our website that we welcome groups and individuals to contact us if they wish to find out more about what we do and the information we can provide.	Ongoing
	Continue to participate in events attended by members of the general public to demonstrate the information and services available.	Ongoing
	We will develop links with local schools and colleges to provide an opportunity for individuals from black and ethnic minority backgrounds to gain an insight into our work.	Ongoing

	Following the results of the 2001 census we translated our standard information leaflets into additional languages. We will await the results of the 2011 census to see if we need to increase the amount of literature we publish in other languages	Completed and Ongoing
	To include specific mention on our website of the language service and translation service that can be provided.	Completed
	To target black and ethnic minority groups through the use of specialist language newspapers and community group newsletters.	Ongoing
	Complete an access audit of the website. Arrange for external accreditation after the introduction of a Content Management System and rebuild of our website.	Ongoing
	Review layout of the customer area in George Square CSC (GSO) & consider providing new seating in both Customer Service Centres.	Ongoing The review of Edinburgh Customer Service Centre is on hold pending possible renovation of MBH
	Explore options for establishing links with representatives of disabled groups.	Ongoing. Our market research company provided disabled mystery shoppers through their links with disabled groups.
	Ensure access issues within our shared accommodation buildings are raised with the Landlords (with support of the Disability Forum.) To ensure that access audits are completed for any new accommodation we acquire this year.	Ongoing