

REGISTERS OF SCOTLAND RACE EQUALITY SCHEME REPORT NOVEMBER 2008

Background

This report covers the activities and outcomes we achieved since our Race Equality Scheme (RES) was last formally reported on in November 2005 <http://www.ros.gov.uk/pdfs/race.pdf>.

In the last few years legislation has been introduced to extend Equality Schemes to include Disability and Gender as well as Race. Given the commonality of what is required for each of the Equality Schemes we have reached the conclusion that it will be easier for our customers, stakeholders and staff to monitor our progress if we produce a single annual report consequently, this report will be the last one relating solely to our Race Equality Scheme.

All our Equality Schemes and annual reports are published on our Intranet and on our web site at www.ros.gov.uk.

Introduction

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. As one of the authorities listed in the Statutory Code of Practice RoS is bound by this legislation.

The general duty of the code is to:

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

RoS Function

We are the Government Department in Scotland responsible for compiling and maintaining records relating to property and other legal documents. Our purpose is recording and safeguarding rights while providing public access to important legal information and maintaining accurate records. RoS administers a total of 16 public registers and our main business function is the registration of interest in land in Scotland.

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 us 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 email, letter and telephone enquiries. RoS is committed to the principles of the Charter Mark Programme. Our performance is monitored and measured against the Charter Mark standards.

Equality Values and Principles

RoS considers equality of opportunity and diversity issues to be an important focus for our business; we aim to maintain a place of work free from discrimination and where equality of opportunity is transparent and monitored.

Race Equality Strategic Aims

RoS aims to increase the level of awareness of our functions amongst black and ethnic minority communities in Scotland and 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.

Consulting our Stakeholders

RoS consults internally for views and opinions of staff as well as consulting with our customers and stakeholders through Focus Groups and customer feedback questionnaires, including an on-line questionnaire. Our Customer Service Centre questionnaire asks for details relating to customers' ethnicity and whether the individual would like to be part of a customer focus group; the details are collated and when numbers allow specific focus groups are held.

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 or request information by telephone, letter, fax or email. In addition, solicitors and others 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 not confident in the use of spoken English can have access to 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.

In addition we welcome requests from community groups and organisations to find out what we do and what information we can provide.

Policies

We are committed to carrying out Impact Assessments of our policies to ensure we are equality proofing our policies and procedures. This is being progressed in our HR Policy Team and will be completed by 31 March 2009.

Recruitment

RoS's recruitment policy covers our external and internal recruitment processes. There are procedures in place 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 internal check. 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 ethnicity (as well as disability, gender or age) legislation implications. In business year 2007–2008 we carried out a combined total of 52 internal and external recruitment campaigns.

Our People

In the business year 2007–2008 our staffing level averaged 1,407. This included 263 part-time staff and amounted to 1,303 full time equivalents. Female staff accounted for 49.1% and 2.3% of staff were of black or ethnic minority origin.

Retention

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

Diversity Working Group

RoS established a Diversity Working Group with our Trade Union, PCS. It meets two to three times a year to discuss diversity issues, including race equality issues.

International Consultancy

Although RoS's work within the international community has reduced in recent years in the business year 2007 – 2008 we hosted study tours and visits from Russia, Serbia, Spain and Hong Kong and completed projects in Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia and Slovakia. We also undertook a project in Egypt to evaluate the development of Land Registration in that country. Our staff working in the International Consultancy team familiarise themselves with the relevant culture and protocol of our International customers.

Action Plan

Our action plan captures how we support the requirements and essence of the General and Specific duties and focuses on work still to be done. Please read on to see what practical steps we are taking to meet our obligations under the General and Specific duties.

| Action Plan A: Duty as an Employer | | | |
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| Function or policy | Impact | Action | Progress |
| Filling posts | High | Increase the proportion of applications at all levels from members of the black and ethnic minority communities, who have the essential skills, so we achieve diversity targets that reflect the latest Scottish Census numbers. The number of black and ethnic minority staff has increased to 2.3%. | Ongoing |
| | High | Ensure all job advertisements contain only the necessary skills and abilities required for the vacancy, to ensure equality of opportunity. | Ongoing |
| | High | 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 |
| | Medium | Enhance training of interview panels to ensure all staff involved in recruitment and selection are properly trained in diversity issues, including the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2002, and to ensure that skills are kept up to date. | Ongoing |
| Developing People | Medium | Implement monitoring of internal training to evaluate minority ethnic staff's involvement in learning opportunities. We aim to develop an on-line tool to replace the current manual check. | Ongoing |
| | High | HR to deliver diversity awareness courses to our staff, where issues such as racial discrimination and race equality are considered. Senior managers and specialist HR staff have already received diversity training. HR will ensure that this training event will engage, as a priority, all of our managers and our Customer Service staff. It will also be made generally available to all other staff. | We provide a training programme for new managers and refresher training for current managers and staff. |

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| | Low | Develop current information on Diversity and Equal Opportunities on the Intranet. | The information on our Intranet is updated and refreshed to reflect any legislative changes and progress against our action plan; staff are encouraged to give feedback on the contents of the Intranet site and on our action plan... |
| | Low | Ensure appropriate material on Diversity and Equal Opportunities is available in ROLZ (RoS's learning and development resource centre). | Ongoing |
| Managing Performance | High | Part of RoS's 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 from them. These commitments are brought to the attention of all staff when they join us and are regularly assessed. | Ongoing |
| | High | To ensure that the data collected in terms of performance ratings are monitored and reported on. | Ongoing |
| | High | To ensure that Equal Opportunity and Diversity issues are appropriately managed in line with RoS's policies and procedures. | Ongoing |
| Monitoring staff | Medium | To set employment monitoring practices to improve the quality and use of data. | In place, with action ongoing |
| | Medium | Our Diversity Working Group meets to consider diversity activities, to monitor progress with targets/equality proofing and to promote diversity amongst staff. | Ongoing |

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| Reviewing and Implementing People Policies | High | Ensure that race equality and other diversity issues are an integral part of any review of policies and procedures. | Ongoing |
| | Medium | To equality-proof policies in terms of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2002 and, where appropriate, to consult externally on proposed changes to policy. | Ongoing |
| | Medium | To develop a Framework to Impact Assess our policies and procedures using the Impact Assessment Toolkit prepared by Scottish Government. | To be completed by 31 March 2009 |

| Action Plan B: Employment Monitoring Scheme | | | | |
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| Process | What we already do | How we measure race equality outcomes | Improvements/changes planned | Progress |
| Monitoring the ethnic origin of staff | Disseminate existing race equality monitoring categories, data and analysis to provide context for a Collective Employment Monitoring Scheme. | HR system to be set up to capture all required information. Ensure data fields are set up to capture information for internal and external vacancies. | Improve the analysis of collected data through the Collective Employment Monitoring Scheme in line with the statutory requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and consider best means to publish data. | Ongoing |
| 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. | Encourage all staff to disclose their ethnic minority. | Ongoing |

| Action Plan C: Provision of Services and Information | | | |
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| Function or policy | Impact | Action | Progress |
| Compiling and maintaining public registers & providing information from public registers | High | We advertise on our web site that we welcome groups to contact us if they wish to find out more about what we do and the information we can provide. In the last 12 months we held seminars for post-graduate students at Stirling, Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh University Law Schools and seminars with students from Aberdeen Business School, Glasgow University and Glasgow Caledonian University; as well as the Institute of Civil Engineers and Institute of Bankers. | Ongoing |
| | Medium | Continue to participate in events attended by members of the general public to demonstrate the information and services available. | Ongoing |
| | Medium | 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 |
| | Medium | Following the results of the 2001 census we will consider translating our standard information leaflets into any additional languages. | Completed and ongoing |
| | High | To include specific mention on RoS's website of the language service and translation service that can be provided. | Completed |
| | Medium | To target black and ethnic minority groups through the use of specialist language newspapers and community group newsletters. | Planned |