
Meeting our Equality and Diversity Requirements

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Introduction

- 1 The Scottish Fiscal Commission is subject to the Equality Act 2010 and associated regulations, though not yet included within the list of organisations required to comply with the specific duty regulations (2012 and 2016). These place a general equality duty on public bodies and further specific duties.
- 2 The Equality and Human Rights Commission states that the purpose of the public sector equality duty is:

“to ensure that public authorities and those carrying out a public function consider how they can positively contribute to a more equal society through advancing equality and good relations in their day-to-day business.”
- 3 This is what needs to be at the heart of what the Commission puts in place to meet its obligations.
- 4 The Scottish Fiscal Commission recognises the value and benefits of promoting equality and having a diverse workforce which allows a wider range of experience and background. In relation to gender balance, overall the Commission is doing well, though it is recognised that more work is required to address other protected characteristics.
- 5 As a Non-Ministerial Office within the Scottish Administration, Scottish Fiscal Commission is required to consider equality in all our functions, including decision making, design of our internal and external policies and in the delivery of services. Over and above the requirements of the law, the Commission should be seeking to operate in a way that respects all of the staff it employs and the people it interacts with; and embed this within its culture and operation.

Equality Act 2010

- 6 The Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 and 2016 set out a single general equality duty and specific duties for listed public bodies in Scotland.

General equality duty

- 7 The general duty requires Scottish public authorities to pay 'due regard' to the need to:
 - eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it
 - foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it

Specific equality duties

- 8 The statutory specific duties for Scotland set out how we provide evidence of what we are doing in relation to equality and will require us to:
 - report on mainstreaming the equality duty and publish against progress every two years
 - publish equality outcomes every four years and report progress toward achieving these every two years

- assess and review policies and practices
- gather and use employee information
- use information on members gathered by the Scottish Minister
- publish gender pay gap information (when we have more than 20 employees)
- publish statements on equal pay (when we have more than 20 employees)
- consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement
- publish in a manner that is accessible

Protected characteristics

9 The Equality Act 2010 applies to nine listed protected characteristics, which are:

- age
- disability
- gender re-assignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

The Commission's approach to equality and diversity

- 10 The decision to use shared services from Scottish Government for HR and procurement bring with them standard procedures and processes which have been designed to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Annex A identifies areas of the Commission's work where there is an active consideration of equality and diversity issues.
- 11 The equality duty requires the Commission to ensure equality issues are given equal weight to other corporate pressures such as financial and resourcing issues. This is now a standing item for meetings of the Governance Board.

Related Policies

- 12 The Commission's Fairness at Work Policy ¹ sets out the Commission's commitment to providing a workplace free from unfair discrimination and ensuring the fair treatment of all staff.
- 13 The policy provides a framework for dealing with instances of, amongst other things, bullying, harassment or victimisation, and includes information on specific provisions covering complaints about external parties and how to make a complaint.

Governance and accountability

- 14 Although all staff have a responsibility for ensuring the Commission meets equality requirements, the statement of internal control requires the Accountable Officer to provide assurance that proper equality impact assessments are done when required and the Scottish Government requires the Chairs of public bodies to have a diversity objective.

¹ Fairness at Work Policy – October 2021 ([link](#))

- 15 Given the small size of the Commission, responsibility for overseeing progress in relation to equalities at an official level sits with the Senior Management Team, reporting progress to the Governance Board at regular intervals. Management of quality and diversity will also inform risk management which is reviewed regularly by the Senior Management Team, and overseen by the Audit and Risk Committee.
- 16 Line managers are responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to equalities and undertake the equality and diversity and unconscious bias training. The Scottish Government policy requires all their staff to have a mandatory diversity objective as part of the performance management system. While this is not an essential part of our shared service with SG Directorate for People, it is a useful way of mainstreaming equality and diversity issues within the organisation and helping to ensure all staff consider equality and diversity issues within their work.

Summary of actions

- Staff should undertake the equality and diversity and the unconscious bias e learning packages provided through Civil Service Learning or Scottish Government Pathways.
- Weekly team meetings, where there is a programme of presentations about a range of issues, will be used as an opportunity to raise awareness of equality and diversity.
- Specific Commission wide training on equality and diversity.
- In developing our understanding of our stakeholders we aimed to understand the barriers to access for those with protected characteristics and will actively engage to establish their needs in relation to the delivery of our functions. This should include the expectations of equality groups over future engagement.
- In seeking to be an open and transparent organisation we use plain English where possible. In all of our communications, including formal reports, our style guides, and email communications we will include consideration of access issues for those with protected characteristics.
- The staff handbook has been updated with information about equality and diversity, including the staff networks, and training available.

Implementation challenges

- 17 There are a number of challenges which the Scottish Fiscal Commission face, including:
- Given the analytical nature of the Commission's work, the recruitment pool is more limited than with other organisations for both Commissioners and staff
 - There are some physical and access limitations with Governor's House
 - The small numbers of staff inhibits the ability to collect data for a number of the protected characteristics, because of the risk that individuals could be identified should the information be published. This also has implications for the ability of the Commission to set meaningful outcomes which can be reported against.

Future Action

- 18 As well as continuing to undertake the actions noted above, we include within our Annual Report and Accounts information on equality and diversity including the gender balance of Commissioners and staff and the gender pay gap for staff.

Annex A - Implementing Equality and Diversity

Accessibility of information we provide

- Plain English will be used where possible
- Provide on request printed versions of publications
- Use of style guides to promote accessibility and consistency of publications
- Undertook a review of the accessibility of our website and publications and ongoing

Events

- Location
- Venues
- Accessibility
- Catering
- Materials
- Diversity of Scottish Fiscal Commission staff visible at the event

Stakeholders

- Identify our stakeholders
- Speak to equalities groups and representatives about accessibility and particular interest(s)

Employment

- Scottish Government recruitment policies are followed
- Actively promote employment opportunities as widely as possible, for example engaging with professional bodies, equalities and interest groups to raise the profile of the Commission
- Mandatory e-learning on equality and diversity
- Mandatory diversity objective
- Unconscious bias training for all staff, with a particular focus on recruiting managers
- Monthly conversations – ensure that well-being and diversity issues form part of the conversation
- Physical access to Governor's House and the overall working environment

Commissioners

- Commissioners maintain the gender balance achieved in October 2025.
- Diversity objectives for Chair and Commissioners
- Succession planning for Commissioners

