

Equality outcomes & mainstreaming

A progress report



The Accounts Commission

The Accounts Commission is the public spending watchdog for local government. We hold councils in Scotland to account and help them improve. We operate impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government, and we meet and report in public.

We expect councils to achieve the highest standards of governance and financial stewardship, and value for money in how they use their resources and provide their services.

Our work includes:

- securing and acting upon the external audit of Scotland's councils and various joint boards and committees
- assessing the performance of councils in relation to Best Value and community planning
- carrying out national performance audits to help councils improve their services
- requiring councils to publish information to help the public assess their performance.

You can find out more about the work of the Accounts Commission on our website: www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/about/ac 

Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000 under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. We help the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission check that organisations spending public money use it properly, efficiently and effectively.

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Highlights

1. This report sets out the manner in which we are addressing our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. It summarises the progress we have made in mainstreaming equalities and in achieving our equalities outcomes.
2. We have made some good progress in areas such as engaging with our stakeholders on how we reflect equality and diversity in our work, and taking care to ensure the accessibility of our reporting. But we look to continuously improve the way in which we work and we recognise that there remains more to do. This means getting better at making equality a component of everything we do, including:
 - embedding equalities in our work
 - meeting people's needs and supporting a culture of diversity.
3. The Accounts Commission is committed to using its position to promote equality in local government. Through the audit work that Audit Scotland carries out on our behalf, we can highlight where Scottish local authorities can improve their practices. We will continue to work closely with Audit Scotland and the private firms which carry out work on our behalf to ensure we take account of the Equality Act when developing and reporting our audit work and in conducting our own business.

Introduction

Our role

4. The Accounts Commission is the public spending watchdog for local government. We secure the audit of Scotland's 32 councils as well as a number of joint boards and committees. We hold these bodies to account and help them to improve. Audit Scotland supports us in our role.
5. The Commission was established in 1975, operates independently of local authorities and the Scottish Government, and meets and reports in public. It has a maximum of 12 members who are appointed by Scottish ministers following a public appointments process.
6. Audit Scotland provides services to, and does work on behalf of, the Accounts Commission. The Commission's work includes:
 - annual audits in individual local authorities where auditors examine annual accounts and supporting financial transactions, and provide a professional view on matters such as meeting regulatory and legal rules, performance, and efficient use of resources
 - preparing public reports which highlight significant issues arising from the annual audits
 - audits of Best Value in local authorities which focus on the arrangements in place for ensuring sound governance, continuous improvement, good management and public reporting on performance
 - audits of Community Planning Partnerships (jointly with the Auditor General for Scotland)
 - 'How councils work' series of reports which aims to stimulate change and improve performance in local government
 - national performance audits which examine whether local authorities are providing value for money in the delivery of public services.
7. The role that we have means that we can encourage and promote equality in local government, and highlight where improvement is needed in meeting the general duty. This means we need to understand the diversity of the Scottish population; reflect this in our audits of how public money is being used; and highlight where equality may be at risk because of the current financial climate.
8. You can find out more information about the roles of the Accounts Commission, the Auditor General and Audit Scotland on Audit Scotland's website www.audit-scotland.gov.uk.

Our organisation

9. Our members are appointed by ministers, with support from the Public Appointments Commissioner for Scotland. Members are appointed on a single set of terms and conditions, and there is a single set of arrangements for induction, re-appointment, allocation to Commission committees, and engagement with Best Value audit, performance audit and other reports. Our current gender profile is nine male members (75 per cent) and three female members (25 per cent). Further information about our current membership can be found at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/about/ac/members.php.
10. The Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland is responsible for monitoring appointments to make sure they are made on merit after fair and open competition. It also reports on diversity on appointments to all public bodies, including the Accounts Commission. Further information is available at the Office of the Public Appointments Commissioner for Scotland's website, www.publicappointments.org.
11. The Commission is keen to ensure that we have a diverse membership. In April 2014 we established a working group of members to look at how we can ensure that our approach to recruitment encourages interest from under-represented groups. Audit Scotland has as part of its equality outcomes action plan specific actions to look at ways to attract those from under-represented groups and to continue to monitor its recruitment and selection processes and implement improvements in response to feedback. We are committed to ensuring that such actions are reflected appropriately in our own equalities outcomes action plan.

Our strategy

12. The Accounts Commission Strategy for 2013-16 was published in June 2013. This sets out the two main influences driving our work over the period:
 - the set of challenges for councils that we have identified in our current and recent work
 - the identified priorities upon which we wish to base our own work, which we ask Audit Scotland and external firms to undertake on our behalf.
13. Our strategy also outlines how we will improve how we do our work to ensure that we fulfil our role effectively in a changing environment. We monitor and report on the progress of our work on an annual basis. An annual action plan is available on our website, www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/about/ac/index.php.
14. We are holding a strategy seminar on 27 and 28 April 2015 to review and update our strategy. We will reflect on how any revisions to our strategy affect our equality outcomes.

Our equality outcomes

15. We are committed to using our position to promote equality in local authorities. During 2012/13, Audit Scotland supported us in developing our equality outcomes. The Commission has overall responsibility for the outcomes although Audit Scotland is largely responsible for taking action to achieve them. To help explain how we aim to meet these outcomes and enable us to measure our progress, we developed measures to underpin these outcomes. Part 2 of this report provides a summary of our equality outcomes and our progress in delivering these.
16. Audit Scotland staff were involved in developing our equality outcomes. During 2012/13, Audit Scotland's Diversity and Equality Steering Group gave presentations to each of its business groups to help raise awareness of the general equality duty for the public sector. These presentations were a great opportunity for staff to give feedback on how equalities are being addressed in audit work and where more can be done. Further discussion followed in two staff workshops. All Audit Scotland staff were invited to participate. Audit Scotland also sought feedback on these outcomes, on our behalf, from equality networks.
17. Audit Scotland use the performance measures linked to our equality outcomes to monitor progress and report back to us. We published initial reports on mainstreaming and equalities outcomes in April 2013. Audit Scotland's Diversity and Equality Steering Group also considers relevant data as it becomes available throughout the year.
18. Our equalities outcomes are due to be reviewed prior to April 2017.

About this report

19. This report sets out the manner in which we are addressing our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. It summarises the progress we have made in mainstreaming equalities and in achieving our equalities outcomes.
20. The general equality duty in the act requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not share it.
21. This report sets out our progress in ensuring the general equality duty is integral to what we do. We are attempting to address this duty in a number of ways and we highlight these in the rest of this report. The report comments on how we are:
 - addressing equalities in our audit work and, where it is appropriate, using our position to promote equalities across the Scottish public sector

- embedding equalities in our policies and practices to ensure we are not discriminating against any particular groups
 - making progress in achieving our equality outcomes.
22. We publish a range of equalities information on an ongoing basis in line with the specific duties set out in the act. This is available from the [Diversity & Equality](#) section of our website. A summary of the manner in which we comply with these duties is set out in Appendix 1.

Mainstreaming equality

Our work

23. Audit Scotland carries out a wide range of audit work on our behalf and its work covers almost every local government body in Scotland. Many of these organisations provide services directly to members of the public. This means that they should ensure their services meet the needs of the individuals who make up Scotland's diverse population. We aim to ensure that this expectation is embedded in the range of audit work that Audit Scotland carry out on our behalf.
24. We need to make sure, therefore, that our audits analyse data about the profile of Scotland's population and the people who make use of public services; gather evidence about how public bodies are delivering services; and examine how public bodies consider the needs of different groups when planning and organising services.
25. We aim to embed equalities in all aspects of our audit work. This section sets out how we are addressing equalities through the work carried out on our behalf and highlights where more can be done.

Equalities are embedded in annual audit planning frameworks

26. Working with other inspectors and regulators on our behalf, Audit Scotland has developed a Shared Risk Assessment (SRA) process to ensure that scrutiny in local government is streamlined and coordinated. The process is also intended to ensure that our resources are targeted using a risk-based approach. The SRA approach leads to a local scrutiny plan (formerly an assurance and improvement plan) for each council.
27. Under the SRA approach, Audit Scotland reviews and assesses the corporate activities in Scotland's local authorities in partnership with other inspectors and regulators. Staff from each of the scrutiny bodies meet to decide the key risks within each local authority with the aim of making sure that audit, inspection and regulation work is better targeted and more proportionate. These meetings are known as Local Area Networks (LANs).
28. This process was introduced in 2008, and since then equality has been one of the main areas considered as part of this annual process. This informed and helped target our work and that of other scrutiny bodies in local government. It has also given us a good overview of how individual councils have been addressing equalities issues. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, together with our scrutiny partners we review the SRA process each year. The most recent review identified significant scope to improve the efficiency of the process while retaining its core value. As a result there is greater focus on more regular ongoing dialogue among scrutiny bodies and enhanced engagement with councils, with underlying documentation being streamlined. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) was involved in this review and we have agreed that it will be the lead body for

assessing public bodies' compliance with equality duties. The SRA process will continue to take an interest in how local authorities are addressing this aspect of their responsibility to achieve best value, helping us to target our work.

We ensure that public bodies report on their equalities performance

29. We exercise our statutory power to define the performance information that councils must publish locally each financial year. Audit Scotland and the audit firms appointed by us also undertake audits to ensure that arrangements are in place to publish the required information and works closely with individual councils as they develop their approaches.
30. We have encouraged councils to develop their own comprehensive set of performance data and have welcomed progress made through the Local Government Benchmarking Framework project. Since 2012 we have placed greater reliance on council reporting and have encouraged councils to use a wide range of service performance and corporate management information. Alongside those developments, as part of our 2008 Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI) Direction we introduced a specific requirement for each council to report a range of information, sufficient to demonstrate that it is securing Best Value in relation to equalities and diversity as part of one of the seven areas covered in SPI1 (Corporate management).
31. Each year auditors check that councils have arrangements in place to meet our requirements and that they have reported on each of the areas required, including diversity and equality. The results of this work are reported in many of the annual audit reports prepared by Audit Scotland and the private firms. We can do more to make sure that this aspect is more systematically reported.

Our audits of Community Planning Partnerships consider how well they understand and address inequalities

32. Community planning is the process by which councils and other public bodies work together, with local communities and the business and voluntary sectors, to plan and deliver better services and improve the lives of people living in Scotland. It was given a statutory basis through the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. Mainstreaming equalities into the community planning process was an integral aspect of the Act.
33. In 2012, the Scottish Government asked us to lead audits of individual Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) to assess their performance. Since 2012/13, we have reviewed eight CPPs and reported the results of these. All of these audits considered the extent to which the CPP has been successful in addressing the significant outcome gaps between the most and least deprived communities in their area. We review how well each partnership understands the key challenges in the local area, based on robust evidence and analysis, and the extent of inequalities. We also consider the progress a CPP has made in closing the gap around inequalities in outcomes.
34. The recent report [Community Planning: turning ambition into action](#) provided a national update on community planning in Scotland since March 2013. It assessed progress locally

and nationally and identified opportunities for further improvement. It highlighted that CPPs need to use local data to help set relevant, targeted priorities for improvement that will address inequalities within specific communities. The report drew on the findings from the eight local CPP audits. Some of the key messages, including the need for CPPs to do more to address inequalities in their local area, are outlined in [Exhibit 1](#).

Exhibit 1

Extracts from Community planning: Turning ambition into action

"There is a strong sense of renewed energy nationally and locally to improving community planning. Community planning continues to become more of a shared enterprise, with more active participation by partners and evidence of more shared ownership of ... priorities in Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs)."

"Although aspects of community planning are improving, leadership, scrutiny and challenge are still inconsistent. There is little evidence that CPP boards are yet demonstrating the levels of leadership and challenge set out in the Statement of Ambition."

"Few (CPPs) are clear about how community planning will improve outcomes for specific communities and reduce the gap in outcomes between the most and least deprived groups. But some SOAs, such as Glasgow CPP's, have identified a small number of specific priorities for their area with associated outcomes."

Source: Audit Scotland

Equalities feature in our programme of performance audits

35. The Accounts Commission and Auditor General's joint programme of national performance audits which aims to be flexible and responsive to the changing public sector environment. Interested parties are invited to suggest topics for this programme at any time and Audit Scotland has been improving engagement with equality organisations about our programme as set out in [Exhibit 2](#). We will build on this approach as we develop future programmes, considering how we can involve other protected characteristic groups.
36. Audit Scotland's framework for planning and managing performance audits requires staff to identify equalities issues where relevant when scoping our national performance audits. Any issues that are to be investigated in relation to equalities are highlighted at the planning stage. Project teams also consider how well equality issues were addressed as part of a post-project review. This helps identify learning points for future audits that can be shared with colleagues. Where there are particular equalities issues that need to be considered, Audit Scotland looks to work closely with equality organisations to ensure that it is reviewing these appropriately. Examples of how this approach has been reflected in performance audits in the last two years are set out in [Exhibit 2](#).

Exhibit 2

Engagement on our programme of performance audits

In March 2014, Audit Scotland held a joint event with representatives from a number of disabled people's organisations to improve links between our organisations and discuss our future performance audit programme. Building on this session, in November 2014, Audit Scotland worked in partnership with Independent Living in Scotland to host a further event between disabled people's organisations and scrutiny bodies in Scotland. The organisations came together to consider the implications for scrutiny from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Following the event, representatives from disabled people's organisations and staff from Audit Scotland met to discuss our forward work programme. The discussion focused on the key issue of risk across all public sector services and equalities issues that could form part of future audit work. The event raised a number of specific equalities issues for us to consider in scoping future audit work, and established new relationships in some policy areas. This was also an opportunity to consider how we can better engage with the sector about our programme of work in future.

Our ongoing dialogue with disabled people's organisations is an important way for us to capture the views of disabled people as part of our work.

Source: Audit Scotland

37. The annual overview report on local government provides us with a good opportunity to pull together equalities issues identified across the range of audit work undertaken in councils. [An overview of local government in Scotland 2014](#) highlighted that councils' experience of dealing with equal pay claims had identified an ongoing need to deliver pay equality. It also commented on the work being done to review terms and conditions to ensure pay schemes are compliant with legal requirements. The report also highlighted the role community planning and public service reform need to play in addressing inequalities. The *Overview of local government in Scotland 2015* found that councils need to take more account of service users' priorities and get better at using local data and involving communities in planning and delivering services. The report includes recommendations to councillors aimed at achieving this.
38. The [Reshaping care for older people](#) audit reviewed progress with the Scottish Government's Reshaping Care for Older People (RCOP) programme. Launched in 2010, the programme aims to improve the quality and outcomes of care for older people and help meet the challenges of an ageing population, giving people the support they need to live independently in their own home and in good health for as long as possible. Audit Scotland engaged an external provider to conduct focus groups with older people and their carers to gather their views on the quality of services in their areas and on the RCOP programme. The report reviews progress with RCOP three years into a ten-year programme and makes a series of recommendations to help the Scottish Government, NHS boards and councils increase the pace of change.

39. We published a report on [Self-directed support](#) (SDS). This is a major change to the way people with social care needs are supported, which is based on the human rights principles of fairness, respect, equality, dignity and autonomy for all. We found that councils still have a substantial amount to do to fully implement SDS and made a number of recommendations for improvement to councils and the Scottish Government. The report included specific examples of initiatives as case studies - including The Minority Ethnic Carers of Older People Project in Edinburgh and the Lothians that works to help minority ethnic carers to access services and support that suit their caring situation.
40. Another report, on *School education*, highlighted significant variation in attainment and that councils could do more to systematically share good practice - highlighting the value of initiatives such as the School Improvement Partnership Programme, which involves the linking up of schools across councils to tackle educational inequalities and raise attainment.
41. Our report on [Options appraisal: are you getting it right?](#), highlighted the need for councils to ensure rigorous and challenging appraisal of options for delivering services. It emphasised the importance of considering the impact on equalities when weighing up the relative merits of different options, and that ensuring equality and fairness may be one of the good reasons for maintaining in-house provision.
42. Audit Scotland has been piloting a new approach to considering equalities issues within a performance audit. The team on the Auditor General's audit on *efficiency of sheriff courts* has worked closely with a colleague from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission throughout the audit. That person is a member of the project advisory group and has commented on key audit products at scoping, fieldwork and reporting stages. Fieldwork included focus groups to capture the views of service users, consideration of data sets by protected characteristics and Scottish Government equality impact assessments. The report is due to publish at the end of the summer 2015. The audit team will evaluate the effectiveness of this approach, with a view to looking at how equalities can be effectively considered in future performance audits and how audit systems and processes could be improved to achieve this.
43. A project to revise our approach to the development of our work programme has recently been established. This will provide us with the opportunity to consider how best we can use available equalities data to help us appropriately target our work.

Best Value audits examine public bodies' arrangements for equalities

44. The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 introduced the statutory duty of Best Value in local government. This duty requires local authorities to:
 - make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in performance whilst maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost; and, in making those arrangements and securing that balance;
 - have regard to economy, efficiency, effectiveness, the equal opportunities requirements and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

45. Our Best Value audits examine how local authorities have implemented the statutory duty of Best Value. Considering equalities is an integral aspect of the statutory duty. It is an important cross-cutting characteristic of the corporate assessment framework that is used to undertake our audit work, and it is embedded in all aspects of the Best Value framework. All of our full Best Value reports on local authorities have included a section on the progress made by these organisations on equalities. [Exhibit 3](#) highlights some examples from recent reports.

Exhibit 3

Examples of reporting on equalities in Best Value audit reports

"The Accounts Commission acknowledges a range of improvements since the last Best Value report in 2007. It welcomes improving performance in ... aspects of reducing inequalities."

"The council and its partners have a clear ambition to tackle inequalities and identify this as an area of particular focus. The council has sound arrangements in place and has taken action to embed equalities throughout its services."

Extract from [The City of Edinburgh Council: the Audit of Best Value and Community Planning](#), Accounts Commission, May 2013

"Scottish police forces have been taking appropriate actions, such as equality impact assessments, to improve equality and diversity through operational policing and within their workforces. Work on equality and diversity has been supported by clear leadership throughout forces. As a result, they are achieving a greater gender balance in their workforces. Police authority members have not demonstrated a clear understanding of their role in promoting equality and diversity and have not led or scrutinised equality and diversity issues effectively."

Extract from [Best Value in police authorities and police forces in Scotland](#), Audit Scotland and HMICS, November 2012.

Source: Audit Scotland on behalf of the Accounts Commission

46. EHRC staff have previously shadowed one of our Best Value audits and gave useful feedback on how equalities can be even more securely embedded in the audit process. The EHRC also observed several LAN meetings which take place as part of the SRA process, which helps inform our Best Value audit programme and the targeting of our Best Value audit work. They made a number of recommendations aimed at giving equalities issues greater prominence in our approach to the Best Value audit and the SRA. We have reflected on this advice as we have continuously developed our processes in these areas.
47. The most recent programme of Best Value audits has focussed on targeted areas identified through the SRA process and follow-up reports at specific councils. These focussed on councils' overall arrangements to achieve Best Value. This has meant less commentary on equalities as a standalone issue than is included in full Best Value reports, but this has remained an intrinsic and important component of the arrangements considered in areas such as leadership, improvement, performance management and use of resources. For example, the December 2014 report on South Ayrshire Council includes an assessment of the council's

planning and performance management processes, with 'Providing equality of opportunity in our service provision' being one of the main outcomes it is aiming to achieve.

48. The Commission is currently reviewing its approach to auditing Best Value. This is providing us with an opportunity to refresh our approach to considering equalities issues in the course of this work.
49. Audit Scotland has published a toolkit on equalities to support auditors carrying out Best Value audits of public bodies. The toolkit helps auditors to establish the extent to which public bodies' arrangements for equalities are designed to achieve and are delivering Best Value. Organisations may also use the toolkit to inform their own self-assessment processes. It has been reviewed to take account of recent changes to equalities legislation.

Our policies and practices

50. We need to make sure that our policies and activities are not discriminatory and that we fully consider diversity and equality issues when developing new policies and approaches to what we do, or significantly changing existing ones. We aim to ensure that our policies and procedures promote diversity and equality.

We aim to communicate clearly and accessibly

51. The Commission's website - provided in conjunction with Audit Scotland's website - is an important mechanism for us to communicate with the public and others about who we are and what we do. We also publish our audit findings and other outputs such as our strategy and annual report on this website. Audit Scotland also publishes and prepares a lot of written material on our behalf. Some of this is provided to audited bodies, and often appears on their websites.
52. Audit Scotland is committed to providing a website and printed material that is accessible to the widest possible audience. It actively works to make sure that printed material and the website are usable by people of all abilities. Its accessibility policy sets out how it does this. In producing this policy Audit Scotland consulted with the Shaw Trust.
53. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement we ensure Audit Scotland runs monthly checks of the accessibility of the website and commission a third-party audit of its accessibility each year. Audit Scotland also review accessibility for printed material annually.
54. Since 2010 Audit Scotland's website has been awarded 'two ticks' accreditation for web accessibility by the Digital Accessibility Centre (DAC). The annual accreditation process includes a dedicated team of users with differing disabilities testing the site on a wide variety of assistive technologies to make sure that all barriers to accessibility are identified and overcome.
55. Audit Scotland routinely uses a third party editor function to review the writing style and language used in our more high profile reports. It also develops the writing skills of its staff and reporting templates to help ensure that we get our messages across clearly.

56. We translate best value reports and annual audit reports that relate to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Highland Council into Gaelic. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has around 52 per cent of its population, and Highland has around five per cent its population, who are Gaelic speakers. This makes our work and findings accessible to different parts of the community and supports our commitment to recognising and celebrating Scotland's diversity.
57. A summary of the key findings of all of our published audit reports are also available as a podcast from Audit Scotland's website. We also translate all of our reports to other languages and formats on request and provide details on the back covers of our publications.
58. All our meetings are held in public, although we may decide to consider some items in private and there is guidance for when we will do so. The agenda and papers for each meeting are available on our website at least three working days before each meeting, www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/about/ac/meetings.php.

We assess the impact of our policies and activities on different groups

59. Audit Scotland carries out Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) on our behalf. These assessments provide an opportunity to consider the impact that our activities have on different groups. Audit Scotland have procedures in place to make sure that any issues particular to one protected characteristic are properly addressed in any assessment of their impact on equalities. Staff involved in developing or changing a policy or practice carry out the EIA and then send these to the Diversity and Equality Steering Group for discussion and approval. All EIAs are published on Audit Scotland's website.
60. Audit Scotland has recently updated its guidance on the conduct of EIAs to make it more user-friendly. This includes a refreshed approach to the way in which we consider whether policies and procedures should be subject to an EIA. The launch of the new guidance will be used to reinforce the importance of such reviews. Audit Scotland is currently undertaking reviews of a number of our main product groups and its significant organisational change programme. As we proceed EIAs will be an important tool in the development of our approaches.

We share what we are doing with other organisations

61. We are keen to learn about good practice in relation to equalities and develop networks with other public bodies. This is important as we do not have dedicated staff to support our activity in this area. Members of Audit Scotland's Diversity and Equality Steering Group attend meetings of the NDPB Equality Forum to hear about experiences and approaches in other public bodies. Audit Scotland also meet regularly with the EHRC, on our behalf, and are keen to develop our engagement with other equalities groups.

We monitor our progress with mainstreaming equalities

62. Audit Scotland's Diversity and Equality Steering Group meets four times a year. The group has supported us in developing our equality outcomes, equalities action plan and monitors our progress in mainstreaming equalities. Some members lead on the protected characteristics,

which involves keeping up-to-date with developments about each characteristic and being a source of advice for staff involved in audits.

63. The group reports progress on its workplan to us on at least an annual basis.

Equality outcomes

Outcome 1: Embedding equalities in our work

We will recognise the diversity of the Scottish population and raise the profile of equalities by embedding this in all aspects of audit work undertaken on our behalf on how public money is being used

Why we agreed this outcome

- 64. Audit Scotland carries out a wide range of audit activity in local government on our behalf. Many of these organisations provide services directly to members of the public. This means they should make sure that their services meet the needs of the individuals who make up Scotland's diverse population.
- 65. Audit work undertaken on our behalf therefore needs to analyse data about the profile of the Scottish population and the people who make use of public services; gather evidence about how public bodies are delivering services; and examine how public bodies consider the needs of different groups using these services when planning and organising services. Our recommendations can potentially lead to change in practices in public bodies. We also need to remember that the people who read our reports and take action on our recommendations come from a diverse population.

Our progress

- 66. Equalities issues are now considered as an integral part of much of the audit work undertaken on our behalf, resulting in public reporting on how public bodies use public money that reflects these issues. Audit Scotland engage with our stakeholders on how it reflects equality and diversity in this work. We also take care to ensure the accessibility of our reporting.

How we will achieve this	Steps we planned to take	Summary of progress
Consult with stakeholders on how to reflect equality and diversity in our work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with equality groups on an annual basis about our work programme • Consult with relevant equality groups on performance audits which have a focus on equalities issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged with Independent Living in Scotland about development of our annual work programme. • EHRC involved in review of approach to SRAs.

How we will achieve this	Steps we planned to take	Summary of progress
<p>Analyse data to help understand who uses local government services and use this to inform audit work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse data about how different groups are using local government services and how local government is using public money to reduce inequality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of performance, best value and community planning audits have used data analysis to consider equalities issues. Initial work undertaken to establish proof of concept for audit intelligence system. This has not progressed sufficiently to support the specific analysis envisaged for programme development. A revised approach is being developed.
<p>Reflect equality and diversity issues in audit work programmes, in a way which is consistent with our audit duties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Area Networks (LANs) will consider whether any equality issues have been identified as part of the annual Shared Risk Assessment (SRA) process The Best Value toolkit on equalities will be applied where considered appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme of training run for LAN members on implications of Equalities Act for local authorities, developed in consultation with EHRC. Equalities issues considered in the course of annual SRA process in discussion with scrutiny partners. Reviewed Best Value toolkit to take account of recent changes to legislation. Toolkit available for use by public bodies in reviewing own arrangements.
<p>Publish information and reports in formats that are accessible to all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to keep up-to-date with developments around sharing information in an accessible way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit Scotland actively work to make sure its printed material and website are usable by people of all abilities. Audit Scotland hold 'two ticks' accreditation from the Digital Accessibility Centre and consulted with the Shaw Trust in setting out its accessibility policy. Printed material is produced with consideration to the <i>See it right - Clear Print</i> guidelines set out by the RNIB.
<p>Report audit findings in a style that reflects the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review all audit findings before annual audit report is issued as part of current internal quality review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual report templates have been revised to ensure findings and conclusions were presented in a more accessible manner.

How we will achieve this	Steps we planned to take	Summary of progress
audience	<p>processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce an editor function to ensure audit reports are written in plain language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An external plain language editor function has been implemented for all performance audit reports and will be shortly be used to refine templates for annual audit reports.
Report on diversity and equality issues where appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek views from equality groups when developing performance audits that cover equality issues • The BV toolkit on equalities will be applied where considered appropriate • The LAN will consider whether any equality issues have been identified as part of the annual SRA process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of performance, best value and community planning audits have considered equalities issues. • Reviewed Best Value toolkit to take account of recent changes to legislation. Toolkit used by auditors in considering audit risk. • Equalities issues considered in the course of annual SRA process in discussion with scrutiny partners.
Support other public bodies in their scrutiny of diversity and equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EHRC Scotland will be reviewing how councils have responded to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We continue to work with EHRC and other scrutiny partners in relation to equality and diversity-related matters.

Priorities for action

67. We need to build on existing approaches to ensure that it understands which aspects are most effective, and apply these more widely. This will help us to involve a wider range of perspectives in developing our work programme. We need to explore how we can make better use of data. As we review our approaches to make them more efficient we need to ensure that an appropriate focus on equality in the work carried out on our behalf is maintained and enhanced.

Outcome 2: Meeting people's needs and supporting a culture of diversity

Our work will be supported by policies and practices that are fair, transparent, meet people's needs and support a culture of diversity

Why we agreed this outcome

68. EIAs can be a powerful way to assess the impact of our activities on protected groups. Audit Scotland staff highlighted that they find the EIA process quite complicated and would welcome more user-friendly guidance and paperwork.

Our progress

69. We have a well established process for reviewing our policies, and considering implications from an equalities and diversity perspective.

How we will achieve this	Steps we planned to take	Summary of progress
Ensure key policies are subject to a rigorous EIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update and refresh guidance for staff on conducting EIAs • Establish a system where all key policies are put forward for an EIA at the point when a new policy is being developed or an existing one is being revised • Gather feedback from staff using the new guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refreshed EIA guidance being prepared and launched. • Programme of completed EIAs published on Audit Scotland's website. • Review of programme of EIAs to be undertaken following launch of refreshed guidance.

Priorities for action

70. New more user-friendly guidance will help reinforce the consideration and use of equalities impact assessments.

Monitoring and reporting on progress

71. Audit Scotland's Diversity and Equality Steering Group has prepared an action plan setting out what needs to be done to help us meet our equality outcomes. It monitors progress throughout the year and prepares an annual report for the Accounts Commission.
72. We publish a detailed report about our progress on mainstreaming and equalities outcomes every two years in accordance with legal requirements (this report). We also consider a update on our progress in the intervening years in public. The last such report was considered in the autumn of 2014.

Appendix 1

Meeting our specific duties

Duty	Equality Act Ref	Summary of requirement	Frequency	Last Published
Mainstreaming progress	Section 3	Publish a report on the progress made to make the equality duty integral to the exercise of functions.	At least every 2 years	This report April 2015
Equality outcomes	Section 4(1) & (2)	Publish a set of equality outcomes having involved protected characteristic groups/ individuals and used available evidence.	At least every 4 years	April 2013
Progress against equality outcomes	Section 4(4) & (5)	Publish a report on the progress made to achieve the equality outcomes.	At least every 2 years	This report April 2015
Equalities Impact Assessments	Section 5	Conduct EIAs for new/ revised policies and publish these. Make arrangements to review existing policies.	Ongoing	Ongoing on website

Equality outcomes & mainstreaming

A progress report

This report is available in PDF and RTF formats, along with a podcast summary at:

www.audit-scotland.gov.uk 

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