

Progress report on the delivery of  
the aims of the general duty of the  
Equality Act 2010.

# Mainstreaming the Equality Act

National Library of Scotland  
2013

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## **Background to this report and the Equality Act 2010**

The 2010 Equality Act draws much of its meaning and authority from the three general duties at its core. These say that public bodies must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In Scotland the Equality Act was followed by additional duties that applied to public bodies, known as the specific duties, or Public Sector Equality Duties.

This report has been produced in accordance with regulation 3 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. The report demonstrates what the Library has been doing to deliver the aims of the general duty, with a special focus on making equality and diversity a part of our day to day work. Making sure that the delivery of equality and recognition of the positive role of diversity becomes part of our daily work is often referred to as “mainstreaming”. This report highlights where mainstreaming is well embedded, where it is beginning to emerge, and where we think we most need to focus on next.

A different requirement under the specific duties asks us to identify what we want to achieve in terms of change in this area over the next few years. Known as “Equality Outcomes” the Library has produced a different document that sets out our vision and identifies areas for activity over the next two years. More specific work plans will be written based on the outcomes we have identified.

You can access the Equality Outcomes document online at [www.nls.uk](http://www.nls.uk) , where you will also find additional information about equality and diversity work at the Library and will have an opportunity to help us to learn and develop.

## **Overview: Our mission to widen access**

Over the last ten years, the Library has been on a mission to widen access to its collections, and in so doing, widen access to culture, knowledge, and ideas. In addition to this fundamental goal, new technology has provided new opportunities for us to reach audiences that may not be able to visit our collections held in our buildings. The last ten years have been about widening access through technological change, especially through the creation and acquisition of digital resources, but also through the development of new partnerships and audiences.

Very recently, the National Library of Scotland Act was passed which aligned our enabling legislation with this mission, and has set new goals for us to achieve. Widening access and broadening the diversity of those that use our collections and services are specifically stated in the National Library of Scotland Act as central to our purpose.

Because of our mission to widen access to our collections, we have already made great progress in mainstreaming equality and diversity in areas of work such as education and outreach. By mainstreaming we mean that the aims of the general duty of the Equality Act are being met as part of the natural thinking, planning, and delivery cycle, rather than as a separate piece of work which sees equality compliance as a different task. The work that has taken place, and continues to take place, in education and outreach is, for us, an example of best practice, and something that encourages us.

The following paragraphs will illustrate what we think has gone well, what we have recently been achieving, and identify where we need to focus on next. At the end of the report are some statistics about our staff composition which we hope will be of interest.

## **Getting it right: Mainstreaming in education, outreach, and learning activities**

An area of growth for the Library over the last decade has been the development of web-based resources and services for our users. These resources are of benefit to all of our customers, and are a great way to reach new audiences who may find it difficult to visit the Library in person, either because of a disability, or because of living in a remote area.

With the progress that technology has enabled come new responsibilities. Digital accessibility, learning ability, and screen reader compatibility are key considerations when developing our web-based resources. Work in this area is ongoing as we continue to discover the possibilities and challenges that constantly developing new technology presents.

### **The Learning Zone**

In addition to the general development of our web-based resources we have focused particular effort on the development of our Learning Zone. This has been developed in consultation with school curriculum teachers and community learning groups. Through the Learning Zone we are able to address the needs of our school age customers and also adult learners who are rediscovering the pleasure of learning that they may have missed out on when they were younger. Being able to do this informally from home may have particular appeal to people who find it difficult, for a variety of reasons, to leave their home (childcare or carer commitments, disability, age, location, or other personal or cultural reasons). The learning team have tried to ensure that a certain percentage of resources focus on women's history (e.g. A Guid Cause which focuses on the women's suffrage movement in Scotland; Women and the First World War).

### **Outreach work**

Whilst our general events and exhibitions programmes are designed to appeal to a diverse range of interests irrespective of people's backgrounds, we also run events that are targeted at particular audiences with specific needs and interests. The Library has run for some years regular workshops in collaboration with the Workers' Education Association. These workshops particularly attract older, often retired people, or people who are unemployed, and attract a higher number of women than men. The workshops aim to help adult learners form a positive relationship with the Library and with learning.

The learning team have organised visits and run projects for users of the mental health care services, mainly via Artlink and the Outlook Project. They also run regular tours and events for older people who are not able to access the reading room, but still wish to engage with the collections in a variety of ways. For example,

they organise 2-3 events per year in collaboration with Contact the Elderly which usually take the form of exhibition tours (led by education / curatorial staff, and sometimes storytellers), handling sessions, or reminiscence sessions. They also run regular events for the Artlink Vintage Club group.

### **Investing in solutions**

The learning team offer regular tours and events for people who are blind and visually impaired, and hard of hearing. Two members of NLS staff are trained in audio description. In collaboration with Artlink, we've offered described exhibition tours and handling sessions for a number of years, and we also have access to a shared portable loop for people who are hard of hearing (purchased jointly with Artlink, the Fruitmarket Gallery, and Talbot Rice Gallery). From summer 2013, there are plans to promote the described tours as part of the What's On programme, and the learning team will also be running a project with a group of visually impaired visitors, focusing on maps, as part of a creative residency.

### **Using our collections to improve peoples' lives**

In Autumn 2012 the Library gave away 1000 copies of a DVD of film clips from the Scottish Screen Archive of everyday life in 20<sup>th</sup> century Scotland to support family carers and staff in residential homes in engaging with people with dementia. Working with the Dementia Services Development Centre (DSDC) at the University of Stirling, the project was generously supported by The Trusthouse Charitable Foundation. A senior curator worked closely with reminiscence and care home workers to produce the DVD, enabling the elderly and people with memory impairment to see some of our distinctive archive material, while also encouraging them to reminisce about their own lives, share experiences and socially interact.

### **Working with themes**

In March this year as part of our public events programme we held a series of talks to celebrate and raise awareness of Women's History month, including talks on the role played by women in the First World War, women in the STEM industries and professions, and Scottish women authors in the early 19th century. The events staff are already looking at new opportunities to support other themes in a similar way.

### **Spreading success**

These examples show that, when done well, equality and diversity are not separate things to deliver but are rather a by-product of delivering creative products and projects that reach out to all people. Inclusiveness is at the heart of this success. The contributory factors behind this success will be examined in the hope that lessons can be learned and put to use in other areas of our work to deliver authentic progress in the area of equality and diversity.

## **Making improvements: Incorporating equality and diversity into our planning**

Where equality and diversity considerations haven't already mainstreamed, the Library has reviewed processes and found two opportunities to amend processes where they can deliver most benefit. The two areas are in corporate planning and in digitisation proposals.

### **Corporate planning and impact assessment**

We amended the approach for the current corporate plan by conducting a high level equality impact assessment of the objectives in the plan. From this a list of projects and plans were identified that would require a full equality impact assessment. This approach has raised the profile of equality impact assessment, and has also enabled us to see themes within our work that potentially have similar equality impacts and opportunities. When work with very similar potential impact is identified, one full impact assessment will take place to address the issues and opportunities arising. This way we hope that we will be able to do more full impact assessments by applying time and resources in a better way. We also hope that by looking at related pieces of work together the quality of the assessments will be improved.

Of course, not everything can be planned for in advance, so staff will be made aware of the kind of things that should trigger an initial screening assessment to establish if a full assessment is needed. That way, should something arise outside of the corporate planning process we can make sure that we address any important equality and diversity issues. A guidance document and template has been produced and will be implemented once training and support is in place. We will review our approach to equality impact assessment at the end of each corporate planning cycle to check that it is delivering compliance against the Equality Act 2010.

### **Changing a process**

Because remote access provides such potential to widen access to our collections, which in turn is of particular relevance to people with a wide range of protected characteristics, the process for approving digitisation projects was reviewed. The proposal process was amended to ask staff to identify equality and diversity impact and opportunity, either by virtue of the content of the collections to be digitised, or the method or manner of the delivery of the project and finished work.

The first proposals under the new process have been submitted, with some excellent ideas from staff that could contribute to the fulfilment of the aims of the general duty. The decision panel will be considering equality and diversity impact in addition to other considerations such as preservation, skills and expertise required, suitability for scanning, funding, and so on. Whilst some proposals did not identify any equality

and diversity risks or opportunities, the proposals that did address this issue will serve as examples of best practice for future proposals.

### **Training and awareness**

Elsewhere, equality impact assessments have been conducted in response to specific changes. In May 2012 the Library provided two days of training to improve the cultural awareness of staff in customer service situations. The training was designed to raise staff awareness of how different cultural norms can create misunderstandings over what constitutes acceptable behaviour in public places. Each course lasted half a day and 33 staff attended in total, mainly from Reader Services and Front of House divisions. The training was initiated by an Equality Impact Assessment of proposed changes to guidance on acceptable behaviour for reading room customers.

Generally there has also been activity in the area of raising awareness of the Equality Act itself amongst managers and staff. A staff forum on equality and diversity provided an opportunity to hear from staff about their ideas and concerns, and to talk about the new Act and what it meant. A presentation was given to the Corporate Leadership Team about the Equality Act, and consultation on our draft Equality Outcomes took place among a wider community of staff.

## **Areas to focus on: Collecting and analysing statistics**

Although there is anecdotal evidence and feedback about the positive work to deliver the aims of the General Duty as a natural part of what we do, especially in the area of education, learning and outreach, we don't currently have as much statistical evidence of what this success looks like, or do enough statistical analysis to show us where else we need to do more work to improve. When statistics are used, they are typically used in response to a request for particular information, rather than proactively as a resource that can tell us things we perhaps weren't aware of. Our Equality Outcomes have been designed to address this.

### **Staff composition**

In light of the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duties the Human Resources department conducted a survey of staff inviting them to complete a questionnaire that identified themselves against the protected characteristics.

Whilst the information (presented in the appendix to this report) was very welcome, the survey resulted in a very incomplete set of data which has been difficult to analyse. A number of developments in the Human Resources department linked to systems upgrades may present opportunities to gather this information in a variety of ways, such as via a self-service HR system option, which may encourage more staff to provide this information. But essentially we recognise that more work needs to be done to raise understanding and build confidence and engagement with equality and diversity measurement.

### **Equal opportunities monitoring in recruitment**

In terms of monitoring equal opportunities for recruitment, what transpired was that data was confidentially gathered and held, but not put to use. Without a specific resource to interrogate the data it was difficult to establish any trends within the data, or identify areas of concern or best practice. This is a concern that has been raised and will need to be addressed urgently. An initial observation is that many applicants chose to answer "Prefer not to comment" throughout the monitoring process. This is something that the Library would like to address through its Equality Outcomes and by reviewing the online recruitment service.

### **Effective use of statistics**

A piece of work that did interrogate statistics was focused on the age profile of staff at the Library, and this has identified issues that we will also need to address. A quarter of our current staff are aged 55 or older. Only 8% of staff are aged below 30. With the move away from a fixed retirement age combined with other factors, the age profile at the Library is likely to continue to move towards a disproportionately older workforce, with an increase in aged-related illness therefore likely. One approach to address some of the issues of the age demographic has been to write

an options paper for the development of a Youth Employment Strategy. This is currently under consideration. Interrogation of the statistics is ongoing.

Apart from the specific things this exercise has revealed about the age profile of staff at the Library, it has also demonstrated the usefulness of statistical analysis and profiling. By using statistics to identify issues on the horizon in good time we should be able to think about more creative and proactive solutions, such as, in this case, the development of a Youth Employment Strategy. For this reason we have placed a focus on statistics in our Equality Outcomes.

## **What next...**

This is our first report on the mainstreaming of the aims of the Equality Act at the Library. We hope that it shows that in delivering our mission to widen access to our collections and services, we have already been fulfilling the aims of the General Duty for some years. For many staff, celebrating the diversity of people and reaching out to new audiences is the day job. Elsewhere the requirements of the new Act have acted as a springboard for change, with improvements already beginning to deliver. What we have also learned though is that there is always room for improvement, and in composing our Equality Outcomes we have tried to identify things that can be delivered that will make changes as soon as we can, whilst setting firm foundations for even more improvement in the future.

We encourage you to read our Equality Outcomes and to let us know how we are doing and how we can do even better.

If you have any comments or queries about any matters raised in this report or our Equality Outcomes do please contact:

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## **Appendix 1: staff composition**

Regulation 6 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 requires us to include in this report information showing the composition of the Library's employees, including a breakdown of the recruitment, development and retention of staff, with respect to the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage, pregnancy, race, religion, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.

As previously mentioned in this report, our use of statistics in this area is something that we need to address. Also as previously mentioned, we did undertake an exercise to gather data from staff in accordance with their identification of themselves against the protected characteristics. Returns were received from some staff, and many of those were only partially complete. We would like to run this exercise again with more support and explanation about the benefits to the individual and organisation of completing the survey. The findings are presented below:

Overall staff headcount = 315

### **Disability**

Disabled = 20

Not disabled = 225

Unknown / blank = 70

### **Ethnicity**

Black / Chinese / Other ethnicity = 6

White = 265

Unknown / blank = 44

### **Marital status**

Divorced / Separated = 19

Married = 143

Single = 88

Widowed = 2

Unknown / blank = 63

### **Religion or belief**

Church of Scotland = 32

Roman Catholic = 14

Other (Christian) = 13

Other (Non-Christian) = 2

None = 92

Unknown / blank = 162

## Sexual orientation

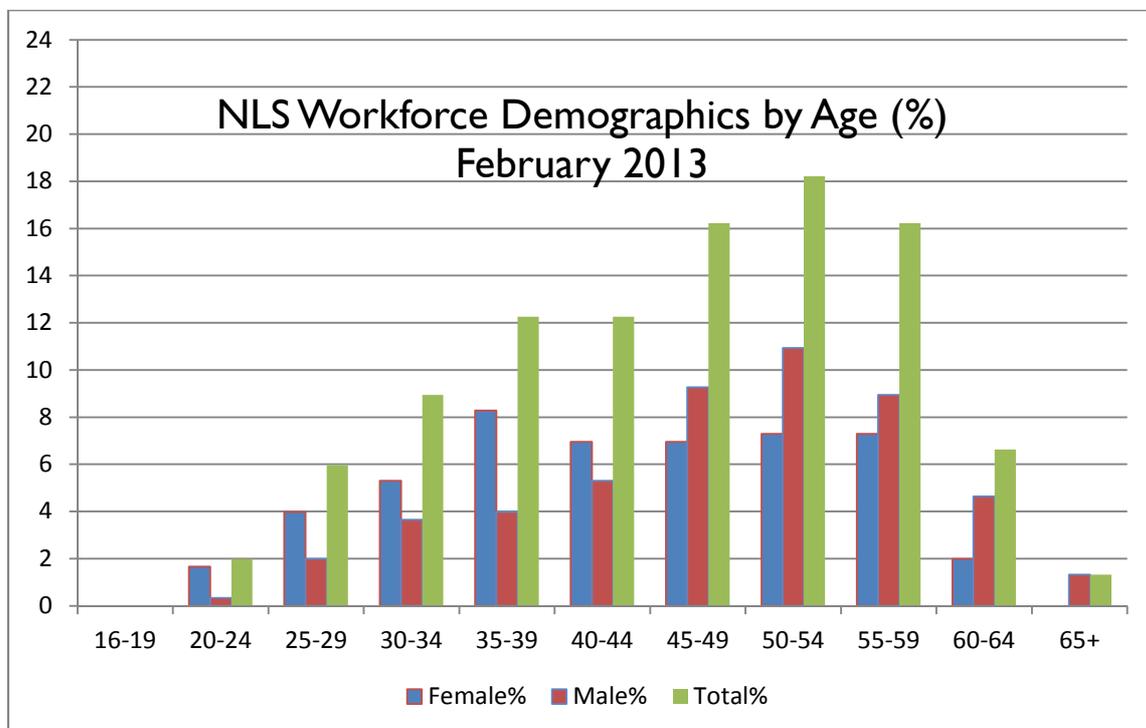
Heterosexual = 139

Lesbian / Gay / Bisexual = 6

Unknown / blank = 170

Further breakdown of this data by recruitment, training, promotion, retention and so on is dependent on having information that we currently do not hold. The Library is currently migrating its personnel records to a new system as part of a development of a shared HR service with the National Galleries Scotland. Our current inability to fulfil this part of the duty is a key concern for us which we are addressing in our Equality Outcomes.

Included below is a graph displaying the information gathered from the statistical analysis of the age profile at the Library:



Because we know the date of birth of our employees we are able to work with a full set of accurate data, and work is currently taking place to interrogate this data to look at patterns and learn about our staff age profile and what this means for staff and the organisation. The approach currently being taken with age statistics is the standard we would like to achieve across data covering all of the protected characteristics.



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