

Audit Scotland Annual Report on Disability Equality

**A progress report for Dec 2007
to Nov 2008**

Introduction

Background

1. Audit Scotland provides services to the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission for Scotland. Together, we ensure that the Scottish Government and public sector bodies in Scotland are held to account for the proper, efficient and effective use of public money. We do this by carrying out performance studies of public services, audits of Best Value in councils and overseeing the audits of around 200 organisations including:
 - 65 central government bodies (Scottish Executive departments, non-departmental public bodies, commissions and other accounts)
 - 23 NHS bodies
 - 32 councils
 - 40 police, fire and other boards
 - 39 further education colleges
 - Scottish Water.
2. Our Corporate Plan identifies our three strategic priorities which provide the focus of Audit Scotland's work:
 - Supporting effective democratic scrutiny
 - Maximising the value of the audit
 - Building an effective and efficient organisation.
3. Audit Scotland adheres to a code of conduct that sets out the standards we expect of staff. The way we work is based on four values - effective communication, quality, commitment to learning and improvement and respect.

Leading and co-ordinating work on disability equality

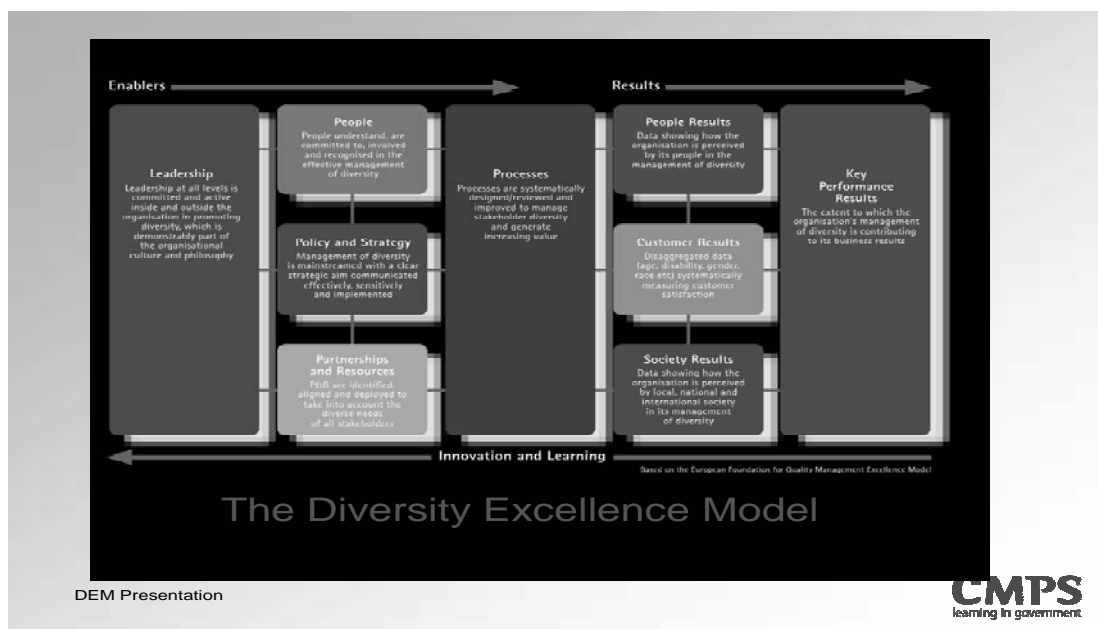
1. The Auditor General for Scotland is our Accountable Officer and has overall responsibility for our Disability Equality Scheme. He works closely with the senior management team (SMT) to oversee the scheme and our action plan. Responsibility for the implementation of the scheme rests with the Director of Corporate Services and the Chair of our newly formed Diversity and Equality Steering Groups (DESG).
2. The DESG involves representatives from across Audit Scotland, including our staff trade union. The role of the DESG is to champion and steer our strategy on all matters relating to equality and diversity. This includes ensuring the effective design and delivery of Audit Scotland's and the Accounts Commission's equality schemes and action plans. The DESG are also responsible for holding business functions to account for their work in mainstreaming equality and diversity in all organisational

activity. Further information on the role of this group and disabled people in monitoring and reviewing our scheme is provided later.

3. We believe that all staff have a role to play in our approach to diversity and equality. All staff receive training on equality through the Management Development Programme (for managers) and an on-line diversity and equality package. Diversity and equality is also covered in our induction programme (for new recruits) and recruitment and selection training for those involved in the recruitment process.

Progress to November 2008

This report details progress in achieving equality and diversity objectives for Audit Scotland with specific reference to our disability equality scheme and lays the platform for work going forward. Achievements are reported against the key areas of the diversity excellence model which is a measurement framework used in Audit Scotland over the past two years. The following diagram shows an overview of the model.



In addition, reference is made to new work currently underway to progress the delivery of a clear diversity strategy going forward.

In March 2008, we reported our progress on the whole equality and diversity agenda taking into consideration our work in relation to all six equality strands. However, the public sector equality duty for disability, introduced in December 2008, requires us to report specifically on our progress on disability over the past 12 months. Therefore, this report concentrates predominantly on this aspect with reference to broader developments where appropriate.

For Audit Scotland, the legislation is only one driver for paying attention to these important issues. As a regulator of public service provision, we wish to promote a good practice approach to equality of opportunity and diversity. We have an opportunity as an employer, a public body and as an auditor and service delivery agent to the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission.

Prior to the launch of the new Equality and Human Rights Commission on 1 October 2007, draft guidance for audit and inspection bodies was published by the Scottish Government. This guidance was developed in conjunction with the three legacy commissions (CRE, DRC and EOC) and was informed by the Audit and Equalities working group on which Audit Scotland was represented. Although the equalities landscape is continuing to change, the key principles referred to in that guidance are informing our approach and we will continue to take an active part in shaping future developments.

1. Audit Scotland Equality Schemes

The public sector duties require us to publish equality schemes and action plans detailing our approach to addressing key issues. We currently have three schemes in place for Race, Disability and Gender covering staggered three year periods linked to when the duties were introduced. All of these schemes are published on our external website. In 2008 we started the ground work to merge these schemes into one overarching equality scheme which covers all six equality strands in readiness of future legislative developments. This has included researching the guidance for building an effective fit for purpose scheme. The additional strands to be covered are Age, Religion and Belief and Sexual Orientation. A combined scheme will allow us to take account of a range of diversity issues (such as multiple discrimination effects) and ensure that no one equality strand is sidelined by combining the schemes. In early 2009 we will start the consultation process for developing our new scheme.

2. Management & Leadership

Our disability equality scheme specifically highlights our focus on mainstreaming the management of diversity by ensuring managers have the necessary skills. It is important to us that managers have the competence to manage diverse teams and embrace opportunities to promote equality in the work that we do.

Internal Delivery Infrastructure

During 2008 we have been further developing our approach to strategically managing the diversity agenda and have built on the work of our existing diversity and equality working group (DEWG). The DEWG has been superseded by a Diversity and Equality Steering Group (DESG) and a new diversity lead, Lorna Meahan, has been appointed as chair of this group. The DESG is supported by delivery teams across the business to reinforce the fact that responsibility for delivery on diversity and equality is shared across the whole organisation. The new Steering Group is finalising its work plan for 2009.

Management Development Programme (MDP)

Our MDP includes a carefully designed module which specifically deals with the promotion of equality. The legal aspects of all three equality duties are covered together with general discrimination law. It is supported by experiential activity and delivered by external specialists, and managers are encouraged to think about the impact of diversity and equality in their day to day work.

To date 57 managers have completed this programme. Feedback from the programme facilitators indicates that participants took a mature and corporate interest in diversity and how understanding could be improved in Audit Scotland. In addition, an independent evaluation of the programme showed that participants felt their awareness on diversity

had been raised 'to some extent'. However, the managers of participants felt they witnessed an increased awareness 'to a large extent'.

In early 2009 additional training is being arranged to ensure managers (and other key personnel) who have responsibility for completing Equality Impact Assessments have a full understanding of the process.

On Line Training

93% of managers across Audit Scotland, including those with informal responsibility for staff supervision have completed our on-line training package *Managing Equality & Diversity*. The training includes interactive case studies and knowledge testing and encourages discussion with regard to the impact of diversity and equality on the work of our organisation. The average score for managers completing the training to date is 94%. We have put in place processes to achieve 100% completion by early 2009.

Competency Framework

During 2008 we have finalised our new Competency Framework which helps us define key behaviours and the approach we should adopt in our day to day work. We made a concerted effort to mainstream diversity and equality into all competencies rather than having a stand alone competency. This has allowed us to promote best practice across all relationships (internal and external) and activities such as decision-making. Although disability is not specifically labelled as a separate strand, the behaviour indicators emphasise taking an individual approach to understanding and responding to people's needs. We expect this will allow for different circumstances to be taken account of. For example our competency on 'Reason, Judgment & Decision-Making' talks of examining matters from a number of different perspectives. Also, our 'Supporting & Developing Others' competency includes making reasonable adjustments to support the special needs of others e.g. formal and informal flexible working. Our competency framework has been finalised and we expect to roll it out to staff during late 2008/early 2009. The new framework will help ensure we measure performance on the delivery of appropriate individual, team and organisational equality objectives.

3. People

Our disability equality scheme includes provisions to ensure staff understand, are committed to, involved in and recognised in the effective management of diversity. Our achievements in this area are highlighted below:

Involvement- internal

Integral to much of our work is a consideration of how people are affected by public policy and practice. Impact assessment type activity has always been a part of our normal practices particularly with regard to our external work and we are now working to make this more explicit and evidenced. Internally, our diversity and equality working group (DEWG) has been involved in the development of our disability equality scheme and has provided a useful sounding board for other activity. The new DESG and delivery teams offer further opportunities for staff to become involved in mainstreaming best practice diversity and equality. We will continue to develop this approach into 2009.

Involvement – external – consulting disabled people

We have a history of consulting widely on the work we do and include equality organisations within the scope of this consultation. In order to develop this further, during 2008 we have been building a working relationship with Capability Scotland, a disability organisation who can support the delivery of our equality objectives. In September 2008

we hosted an involvement event with Capability Scotland where a number of disabled people were invited to contribute to debate and discussion in three areas of current focus. These were:

- Audit Scotland's Corporate Priorities for 2008-2013
- The Forward Study Programme
- The Best Value Review of Recruitment

The event was very worthwhile and a significant number of recommendations were made by the group. These are currently being considered in detail by the respective teams and, where appropriate, will be implemented and/or incorporated into our ongoing equality scheme and action plans. A final report of the consultation event showing discussion themes, recommendations and actions to be taken will be published on our website once this process is complete. This will also be copied to the disabled people who participated in the consultation so that there is clarity about how their ideas and recommendations have informed our work. We will also provide explanation where we have felt it is not appropriate to take forward a recommendation. From the analysis so far, there are several emerging themes which are covered below:

- **Raising Awareness** – the need to ensure the general public (including people with disabilities) are aware of the work of the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland, particularly in relation to studies. The participants felt that Audit Scotland was predominantly known for financial audit and there was a lack of awareness about the other activities the organisation undertakes.
- **Accessibility** – ensuring publications are accessible in different formats and summaries available in clear, understandable formats. Both ease and speed of access was mentioned as disabled people do not want to have a long delay in receiving information whilst alternative formats are prepared following their request.
- **Leveraging influence** – how the organisation can further use its powers and influence to promote compliance with equality legislation in the public sector; and share best practice in the area of disability equality (and equality generally).
- **Sensitive handling of disability related information** – this particularly relates to recruitment and employee records and is covered in more detail in our Recruitment section.
- **Mainstreaming equality** – particularly ensuring that in mainstreaming there is still clarity of where equality and diversity issues have prominence. In essence, the group highlighted that mainstreaming is not about assuming equality and diversity issues will be picked up as part of business as usual.
- **Skills and Competence** - Ensuring Auditors and Advisory Groups who are expected to highlight diversity issues have the training and support to deliver on this. The group emphasised the need for Disability Equality training in particular but this observation also applies to other equality strands.

We intend to run regular consultation and involvement events in conjunction with Capability Scotland going forward. We are in the process of identifying suitable topics for another event in Spring 2009.

Measuring staff opinion

Audit Scotland's staff attitude survey now includes specific diversity related questions, the results of which provide valuable information for addressing priorities. We also asked all of our staff for their views on how Audit Scotland was performing in this area.

Some examples of our findings in relation to disability are included in the section below entitled 'People Results'.

Training

The majority of staff have now completed the on-line Diversity and Equality training package which was launched in October 2007. During quarter one of 2008, the results and impact of the learning were discussed as part of regular team meetings. The average score for staff who have completed the training to date is 92%. We have put in place processes to achieve 100% completion by early 2009.

Our induction process includes specific coverage of equality and diversity including the impact of the disability equality duty. Our recruitment and selection training also covers general discrimination legislation and specifically deals with disability discrimination.

A three day Customer Service training course for front line staff was delivered in late 2007/early 2008 and a key theme was the concept of respecting others and understanding differences.

4. Policy & Strategy

The Diversity Excellence Model promotes clear strategic aims on diversity, which are communicated effectively, sensitively and implemented. Within our Disability Equality Scheme we identified actions required and below we highlight some of our progress in the area of policy and strategy:

Communication

We are mainstreaming diversity through our publications/communications strategy. Following consultation with users internally and externally, our website has been rebuilt and offers different formats for users including pdf, rtf and mp3 versions of publications. The take up of mp3 versions has exceeded expectations. Improving accessibility has been a key objective and we have benefited from advice from the RNIB who conducted an accessibility audit for us. The Shaw Trust have also approved the accessibility of our website and 'Browsealoud' software can be downloaded from their website and used to access all content as the spoken word. Shaw Trust is a national charity that provides training and work opportunities for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market due to disability, ill health or other social circumstances. We received their accreditation in August 2008 as recognition of the highest level of accessibility built into our website. We will strive to maintain this standard in the years to come.

Consideration is also given to the likely needs of different audiences which enables reports to be printed in alternative formats in advance (e.g. large print). We will continue to develop the inclusivity of our communication processes and build effective methods of consultation in support of meeting our equality duties. Specific learning from the last disability involvement event showed that, although we have the mechanisms in place to produce materials in alternative formats, these requests have been infrequent. This may in part be due to the fact that we continue to publish all our reports in RTF format to allow ease of access. We also provide podcasts for most of our major reports, which continue to prove popular. We are working to ensure that we can respond promptly to any future requests.

In addition, we have been more explicit in promoting our equality and diversity work in core publications such as the annual report and we will continue to develop this.

Benchmarking

We continue to capitalise on the good relationships we have with other public bodies. We have gained insights into their work on disability equality which has helped inform our own practice. In addition to councils we informally benchmark with other comparator organisations such as the National Audit Office and utilise groups such as the Public Audit Forum. Our recent work with Capability Scotland has enabled us to compare our approach anecdotally with other organisations they are supporting. This is informing our practice, particularly in relation to how we feedback the outcomes of consultation events to disabled participants.

Implementing and progressing our Disability Equality Scheme

Over the last 12 months our Diversity & Equality Working Group (DEWG) and now the Disability & Equality Strategy Group (DESG) have been the main vehicle for taking a co-ordinated approach across different functions. We are now meeting regularly to discuss topical issues in relation to Disability and other equality strands. Within functions, we have allocated individuals to take responsibility for diversity and equality on key pieces of work and specific processes. Progress on tools to enable consideration of diversity and equality and impact include the following:

Reviewing Best Value - During this period, one of our most important activities has been reviewing the best value audit. In this review, and in the preparatory work for Best Value 2, we have been guided by 7 principles, including a “stronger focus on the experiences of citizens and service users”. This means considering all diversity strands and equality issues in all of the key Best Value criteria and we comment on this in every Best Value report. To support the consideration of equality and diversity issues in Best Value 2 we have developed a guide to equalities in the Best Value audit manual which comprises an on-line tool. We also report through the statutory performance indicators on the number of council buildings from which the council delivers services to the public and percentage of these in which all public areas are suitable for and accessible to disabled people.

- ***Performance Audit Work and Public Reporting Studies*** - In order to realise the opportunity to promote equality in our externally focussed work we have made consideration of equality and diversity mandatory in developing project and study briefs. In order to ensure the right questions are asked, a guidance booklet entitled ‘Building diversity and equality into our work’ has been developed by a sub group within the Public Reporting Group. This has been made available across the organisation. The booklet raises awareness about disability considerations alongside other equality strands and gives explicit guidance on how to consider diversity and equality aspects at every stage of research.

At our consultation event with Capability Scotland we explored the following:

- ***Forward work programs (FWP)*** - There is an increasing focus on impact within the FWP, with a mapping of studies to consider their impact on different levels. For example, improving effectiveness and quality, providing assurance and arrangements for accountability, improving economy and efficiency and improving planning and management. We also take account of the opportunity to weave in equality impact considerations. The project lead is responsible for

identifying any equality and diversity issues relevant to a particular study. During our consultation with Capability Scotland we discussed the FWP in detail. The participants recommended disability equality training to ensure that Project leads have the skills and competence to identify equality and diversity issues, particularly issues relating to disability. We will be considering the feasibility of this as part of our overall consideration of consultation outcomes.

- **Statutory Performance Indicators** - Audit Scotland specifies statutory performance indicators (SPIs) which all councils, police forces and fire brigades must publish. There are specific indicators relating to Disability. Consultation is ongoing to ensure these measures are relevant.

In November 2008 Audit Scotland published a report on the impact of the race equality duty on council services. The focus of this study was on race equality policies and processes and the need to ensure these have a positive impact on services. Full details can be found on our external website.

Impact Assessments

The impact assessment process includes consideration of impact in relation to disability to determine if any unjustified discrimination exists. As part of developing a single equality scheme, we are currently in the process of reprioritising our functions and policies to build an updated programme of impact. We recognise that integral to our work is a consideration of how people are affected by public policy and practice. Impact assessment type activity has been happening as part of Audit Scotland's normal practices and we are now working to make this more explicit and evidenced to ensure compliance with the equality duties.

The Scottish Governments' Equality Impact Assessment tool is being used to support the impact assessment process in Audit Scotland. Training is being organised for early 2009 to ensure that those responsible for completing Equality Impact Assessments have a full understanding of the process. We are currently planning and progressing Equality Impact Assessments in relation to:

- Best Value Review of Recruitment
- Electronic Working Papers Project (included in tender process)
- The second round of best value audits in local government

Some of our interim findings regarding the equality impact assessment of recruitment are included in the section of this report on Results.

We recognise that we have further work to do to ensure that equality impact assessment is both integral to all our activity and that a co-ordinated approach is evident across the organisation. Our revised diversity delivery infrastructure will enable us to move this forward over the next 12 months.

5. Partnerships & Resources

The Diversity Excellence model emphasises the need to have partnerships and resources aligned and deployed to take into account the diverse needs of all stakeholders. Within our disability equality scheme we identified some specific actions around IT, facilities and procurement:

IT provisions

The context for Audit Scotland's IT strategy is defined by eight major drivers including the mobility needs of staff. A key principle underpinning IT development is supporting the delivery of flexible systems to meet colleagues' diverse needs. We have been pilot testing a wider range of equipment so that we can support diverse needs more effectively. This includes light weight portable hardware for staff who need mobility between offices (some 70% of Audit Scotland staff who in some cases have physical health conditions which affect their ability to carry heavy weights). In 2008 a survey of user working preferences and requirements was conducted. The majority of staff stated they were happy with the size and weight of their laptop (51%). However, 45% of staff felt the screen size should be smaller and laptop lighter. This information will help us select equipment and accommodate diverse needs. We will take account of the needs of users at all stages of system selection and will offer flexible choices to support them.

Mobile Working

We will continue to enhance the capabilities for mobile and remote working to deliver greater flexibility of choice of working environments and locations. We recognise the importance of mobile working and this is supported by our choice of hardware, the Wide area network covering remote sites, Outlook Web Access, the VPN for remote access. We will implement projects such as Citrix Access Gateway to further enhance the capabilities of connecting users with the core applications and data.

System Selection

Systems and equipment selection will include consideration of users with disabilities to maximise the number of potential users. Tender documents will also include diversity statement requests from suppliers.

Equipment Flexibility

Users will be able to request equipment to assist in their working environment, such as large monitors, specially designed or ergonomic keyboards and mice.

Facilities

An accessibility audit of our premises has been completed and recommendations are now being taken forward for implementation.

An on-line workstation assessment package has been introduced to educate staff on the facilities adjustments available to support their needs.

The provision of catering facilities has been enhanced to ensure any special dietary needs can be accommodated.

Procurement

Our procurement guidance now includes equality and diversity requirements and we expect our suppliers to adopt the same standards as ourselves with regard to valuing diversity and promoting equality.

6. Processes

With regard to disability equality, we have prioritised our processes to focus on inclusive communication as well as our quality frameworks.

Communication

Our communication approach is designed to ensure inclusivity in language and we consciously avoid bias in terminology used. Our complaints policy and procedure has also been reviewed. Our feedback mechanisms internally and externally help us to identify further areas for improvement and this continues to be an area of ongoing focus.

Quality Framework

We continue to look at how we can further embed diversity and equality considerations into our quality frameworks. For example, within our Public Reporting Group, we have developed explicit guidance on how to consider diversity and equality aspects at every stage of research.

7. People Results

We are keen to understand how our organisation is perceived in relation to our work on equality and diversity and make use of monitoring data and employee research for this purpose.

Employee Monitoring and Recruitment

Our annual equality monitoring report includes information on disability alongside other equality strands such as gender, race and age and draws on information from our staff records. We are also able to supplement this following disclosure of additional equality information on sexual orientation, religion and caring responsibilities by respondents to the staff opinion survey.

In relation to disability amongst existing staff, we have used the demographics section of our staff survey to gather disability information. From this analysis we are aware that 11 staff identified themselves as having a disability. Due to the small numbers involved we are unable to report on the categories of disability. We also gather disability information throughout the recruitment process and report on this annually. We are aware that there may be some gaps in our data and/or a lack of disclosure of disabilities. This is particularly evident in recruitment where 7% of applicants during the period January 2007 to March 2008 omitted to answer questions on disability in the monitoring form. In our consultation with Capability Scotland we discussed the challenges of disability monitoring in the recruitment process and received some sound advice about ensuring the collection of disability data is handled sensitively, particularly during the recruitment process.

Our last diversity and equality annual monitoring report (March 2008) also highlighted that we had 19 applicants for jobs (1.9% of all applicants) declaring a disability of which 5 were interviewed but none were appointed. As part of our progress on equality impact assessing our recruitment approach (and in addition to our consultation with Capability Scotland) we have been consulting with new recruits, managers and our supplier recruitment agencies to explore how we can:

- more effectively and sensitively collect and analyse meaningful information on disability (both for new recruits and for existing staff),
- attract more disabled applicants to apply for our vacancies;
- ensure there is no discrimination during the recruitment process.

A significant number of recommendations were made by disabled participants at our consultation event. These included ensuring that our recruitment partners are acting on our behalf in promoting equality and diversity and that their monitoring arrangements are

robust. The full range of recommendations are currently being considered in detail as part of the Best Value review of recruitment and the Equality Impact Assessment Process. Where appropriate, these recommendations will be implemented and/or incorporated into our ongoing equality scheme and action plans. A final report of the consultation event showing discussion themes, recommendations and actions to be taken will be published on our website once this process is complete.

We will be implementing revisions to our processes, procedures and general approach in 2009.

Opinion Survey Results

Our staff opinion survey includes some specific diversity related questions which will enable us to track opinion over time and also benchmark our results with other organisational norms. Our results have improved incrementally over time e.g. when asked if we provide equal opportunities regardless of disability, 61% of respondents agreed and 30% neither agreed or disagreed (58% and 31% respectively in 2005). These results are comparable with benchmark organisations. The results indicate that we have the opportunity to promote our work on disability equality within the organisation as well as externally.

8. Customer Results

Our clients and stakeholders are diverse and we are always looking for opportunities to promote equality in our relationships. We are keen to use the influence we have to promote equality and diversity. During the last 12 months we have undertaken a stock take of our initial work on prioritising policies and functions. We recognise that this needs to be revisited as part of our development of a combined equality scheme. This will ensure that our work for 2008 and beyond is comprehensive and well informed. A key ongoing focus is the review of Best Value and development of BV2 and how we incorporate diversity and equality factors into this work.

9. Society Results

We are working to implement some of the recommendations of the Crerar Review about joint working between audit and inspection agencies. Historically, we participated in the audit and inspection group established by the Scottish Government to look at how audit and inspection bodies can leverage their influence in the equalities field. We are keen to continue our involvement when this group reconvenes. We are also building relationships with the new Equality and Human Rights Commission to identify how we can work together to best effect.

10. Key Performance Results

The Diversity Excellence Model encourages us to look at the extent to which our work on diversity and equality contributes to our business results. Our current disability equality scheme does not make explicit reference to this in the supporting action plans. Therefore, this needs to be an area of focus in developing our revised combined equality scheme. In particular our business results can be interpreted as:

- the extent to which we can use our influence on equality and diversity in the public bodies we audit;
- measuring the impact our studies have.

Conclusion

A good amount of work has been undertaken during the last 12 months to eliminate discrimination and promote equality across all equality strands and with our influence on external stakeholders. In this report we have highlighted disability specific activity as well as some of the cross strand work which has an effect on disability equality. Overall we have been developing our approach and building a strong platform for future work.

The implementation of our revised delivery infrastructure will ensure responsibility for delivering the diversity agenda is embedded at all levels in the organisation and enable a joined-up approach across the organisation.

Next Steps

Our key immediate priorities going forward are:

- Introducing a combined Audit Scotland equality scheme and updating our action plans to reflect current work priorities.
- Reflecting the equality duties efficiently through the next stage of best value and other key processes.
- Ensuring our own activities are effectively equality impact assessed.