



EQUALITY DUTY MAINSTREAMING REPORT

2024-25

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The public sector equality duty, as defined within the Equality Act 2010 and referred to as the general equality duty, came into force in April 2011.
- 1.2 The general equality duty requires the Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission (“the Commission”) as a public body, in the exercise of its functions, to have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 1.3 The equality duty covers the protected characteristics of:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Sex
 - Gender Reassignment
 - Pregnancy & Maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or Belief
 - Sexual Orientation

The duty also covers marriage and civil relationships, with regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination in employment.

- 1.4 The specific duties require the Commission as a public body to publish a report on the progress it has made in integrating the general equality duty within the exercise of its function, so as to better perform that duty. The report was initially published on 30 April 2013, and subsequently at intervals of not more than two years.

2.0 Equality Review

- 2.1 The Commission has undertaken this review in line with the requirements of the general equality duty and to demonstrate the Commission's commitment to ensuring that its working practices and procedures are open and inclusive.

- 2.2 During 2024-25 the Commission has specifically undertaken the following to further enhance its commitment to the equality duty and overall enhancement of internal practices and procedures:

- Within the period the Commission reviewed and updated its "easy read" application form. This was initially produced in 2021 but has been subject to a comprehensive review and update. The main focus of updates have been to simplify, as much as possible, the information requested in order to assist those with learning difficulties or literacy issues. The equalities monitoring form and the process for review completed returns has also been updated in order to enhance the quality of data being received and assist in future analysis.
- The Commission produced a new "access to services" information leaflet for potential applicants and stakeholders as a means of easily signposting support services and organisations, including: Judiciary Office, SCCRC, Private Practice Solicitors, Public Defence Solicitors Office, Miscarriages of Justice Organisation and Advocacy Services. This new information leaflet will be distributed as part of the new application pack.
- The Commission continued to participate in the compilation of the Public Sector Employment Statistics, providing information on the number of male/female and temporary/permanent staff it employs. These statistics are updated and submitted to Scottish Government on a quarterly basis.
- The Commission fully participated in the Scottish Government's Youth Employment Statistics Collection, whereby details of any employees aged 16-24 were shared. No new Youth Apprenticeship Scheme opportunities were available within the review period an account of low levels of turnover. Two members of staff have previously been appointed under this scheme and subsequently retained on permanent employment contracts.
- The Commission Corporate Plan and Business Plan both set out to address inequalities by continuing to work with key stakeholders to identify and address any perceived or actual inequalities that may arise as a result of the way in which our service is provided.
- All Commission staff continued to include specific equalities personal objectives within their forward job plans and personal development plans for the period 2024-25.

- The Commission gathered and updated data in respect of all employees by way of its equal opportunities monitoring form. Data captured covered sex, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religious belief. Given the staff complement of the Commission there is no requirement to publish an analysis of this information and therefore this data is retained internally.
- The Commission continued to gather equalities data in respect of all applicants to ensure that ongoing equalities and diversity procedures were effective and any issues in respect of accessibility to the Commission's services could be identified and addressed. This also enables staff to consider any reasonable adjustments that may be required as part of the review process and interactions with applicants.
- The Commission produced its first report under the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 in 2021-22. Since then, the Commission has achieved its aim of 50:50 gender representation on its Board. By 31 March 2025, the gender ratio on the Board was 75:25 in respect of female to male members.
- The Commission reviewed its Case Handling Procedures and agreed updates in respect of how equalities data received at the application stage would be dealt with. Further proposed changes to the automated case management system to reflect these changes was agreed and will be taken forward in 2025-26.

2.3 The Commission currently employs a total of 10 staff with a gender split of 60 % female and 40 % male. Details of gender pay equality is also routinely disclosed within the annual remuneration report, which forms part of the Commission's statutory annual accounts. Pay data also compares senior salary levels to median pay.

2.4 A full update on progress against specific equality outcomes is set out at appendix A.

3.0 Future Plans

3.1 In line with the Commission's ongoing commitment to the equality duty and the overall enhancement of its operating practices and procedures, the Commission has identified the following plans for 2025-26 and beyond which will further mainstream the equality and diversity agenda.

- The Commission will continue with the development and roll out of its new corporate website with specific aims including compliance with full accessibility standards. A new online application form and process will also be implemented in an attempt to make the service more widely available and accessible.
- The Commission continue to put in place enhancements to its case management system and update the case review process in line with the case handling procedures. Specific enhancements during this period will include an enhanced equalities monitoring section, with limited access, which will facilitate more effective equalities monitoring and review.
- Enhancements to practices, policies and procedures, identified as part of the impact assessment process will continue to be implemented.

- The Commission will continue to work directly with the National Induction Centre at HMP Shotts with regard to its ongoing programme of prison talks to staff and prisoners with the aim of enhancing understanding of the Commission's role and the application process. This process has been significantly impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic.
- The Commission will continue to take forward internal research throughout the course of 2025-26, and will continue work on evaluating the implementation and impact of the easy read application form and information leaflets on accessibility to the Commission's service.
- The Commission will continue to work with Scottish Government and the Public Appointments team in respect of Board succession planning in order to ensure that the Public Sector Equality Duty is met and that appropriate work is taken forward to promote gender balance and diversity.
- The Commission will commence work on the development of its new Corporate Plan, covering the period 2025-28, and ensure that appropriate coverage to the equality agenda is included within its 3-year focus.
- The Commission will undertake a review of updated equalities legislation to ensure that all related policies are up to date and reflective of changes in legislation, expectation and good practice.



EQUALITY OUTCOMES – 30 APRIL 2025 UPDATE

As part of the Commission’s commitment to the Equality Duty and in accordance with the duties placed upon it, the following equality outcomes have been developed. Progress on the achievement of these outcomes will be reported by 30 April 2025.

The development of the Commission’s equality outcomes has also been undertaken in line with its general commitment to the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework, and in particular, its contributions to national outcome 7:

We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish Society.

Equality Outcome 1:	The Commission’s service is equally accessible to all persons convicted of a crime in Scotland.
Purpose:	To enhance systems, procedures and overall accessibility.
Protected Characteristic:	All characteristics
General Duty:	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and advance equality of opportunity.
Outcome:	<p>The Commission will put in place a new corporate website which is fully compliant with accessibility standards and provides enhanced functionality and the ability to interact with the Commission securely.</p> <p>Update – the Commission is currently in the process of redeveloping its corporate website with accessibility being one of the key considerations – both to information available on the site and accessing the Commission core service. Given the timescales agreed within the project brief, the new site should be operational by July 2025.</p> <p>The Commission will review, update and roll out new “easy read” information leaflets and an application form.</p>

Update – work on a new “access to services” and application form has been concluded during 2024-25. The access to services leaflet is now a standard part of the application pack and the revised application form, with improved equalities monitoring, is currently with designers before imminent roll out.

The Commission will continue to develop and deliver its schedule of standard and tailored information talks to Scottish Prisons.

Update – the Commission has undertaken extensive engagement and awareness raising activities over the past 2 years, following the pandemic. This work has been taken wider than just prison talks and has focused on applicants and potential applicants, defence solicitors and other stakeholders including Criminal Justice Social Workers, Advocacy Groups, Barnardos and MOJO.

Equality Outcome 2:	There are no barriers in the Commission’s recruitment, training and development opportunities.
Purpose:	Enhance openness, accessibility and governance over recruitment and development.
Protected Characteristic:	All
General Duty:	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations.
Outcome:	<p>The Commission will continue to utilise data collection and equal opportunities monitoring techniques along with staff surveys to ascertain the success of these policies.</p> <p>Update – the Commission continues to collect equalities data from staff on an annual basis. The size of the organisation does however limit the amount of meaningful findings and positive action that can subsequently be taken forward.</p> <p>The Commission has, since the last mainstreaming report, undertaken a further staff survey. This was done independently by the Commission’s internal auditors and provided useful anonymous feedback which will be considered further and incorporated into future business plan objectives.</p> <p>During 2024-25 the Commission developed and agreed a new Staff Wellbeing Strategy which included various measures of success of impact including: staff turnover, absence, flexible working requests, wellbeing initiatives, staff survey results and employee assistance programme/occupational health referrals.</p>

The Commission will continue to provide its staff and Members with ongoing training and development in respect of equalities matters on at least an annual basis.

Update - the Commission requires all staff to undertake training and development in respect of equalities matters on at least an annual basis. During the course of 2024-25, all staff have been involved in extensive trauma training which is in line with our strategic aim of delivering a quality service which is person-centred and trauma informed.

Equality Outcome 3: More young people are in work and training.

Purpose: To extend opportunity of employment and development regardless of age.

Protected Characteristic: Age

General Duty: Advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Outcome: In line with the Commission's Youth Employment Strategy the Commission will continue to promote opportunities for young people, specifically Youth Apprenticeship Schemes and investigate training opportunities within the Commission.

Update - one recruitment process has been taken forward during the course of 2024-25. The use of youth apprentice schemes was considered as part of the recruitment strategy although was deemed to be fully suitable based on the role and move to part-time working arrangements. This will however continue to be considered for future recruitment processes.

In its wider context, the Commission will continue to set out to influence the approach undertaken by key stakeholders and contractors in the area of youth employment and development.

Update - the Commission has had limited opportunity to take this forward with stakeholders and contractors. The Commission's Procurement Policy is however due for review in 2025-26 and consideration will be given on however we can provide furtherance to this objective.

Equality Outcome 4:	Commission staff are more aware of equality and diversity.
Purpose:	To provide staff with the ability to undertake their roles in a fully inclusive and non-discriminatory manner.
Protected Characteristic:	All
General Duty:	Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations.
Outcome:	<p>The Commission has in place ongoing staff training and development plans which now specifically require all staff, as part of their personal objectives, to undertake ongoing relevant equalities training each year.</p> <p>Update - the Commission requires all staff to undertake training and development in respect of equalities matters on at least an annual basis. As noted above, comprehensive trauma informed training has been taken forward during 2024-25.</p> <p>The Commission will continue with this requirement and ensure that all equalities training and development is targeted based on the services provided, the outcomes of Commission research into diversity and the general training needs of individual staff. The outcome will be that staff are more aware of the equality and diversity of the Commission's applicants and their specific needs.</p> <p>Update – the Commission continues to identify training needs and development as part of the staff appraisal and performance policy.</p>