



Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board -

RACE EQUALITY SCHEME

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RACE EQUALITY SCHEME

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ABOUT THE ASSESSOR

The Assessor is responsible for three functions and services to the constituent authorities. These are the compilation and maintenance of the Electoral Register, the maintenance and annual publication of the Council Tax Valuation List and the maintenance of the non-domestic Valuation Roll. There are around 212,000 registered electors in the area, residing mainly in the 128,000 or so domestic subjects shown in the Council Tax Valuation List. The Valuation Roll has some 10,600 entries with a total rateable value of over £260m. The Assessor's service operates from one central location employing over sixty personnel.

Although the Race Relations Act places new obligations the service has always been conscious of avoiding discrimination.

A copy of the Joint Board's Equal Opportunities Policy Statement is attached. (Appendix 1)

GENERAL DUTY

Through the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Government has placed a general duty on all public bodies, including local authorities, to promote race equality - taking action to prevent acts of race discrimination before they occur. In practice this translates into a requirement to:

- Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- Promote equal opportunities
- Promote good race relations between people from different racial groups.

The duty makes the promotion of racial equality central to the way that the Assessor's service operates, improving our services to everyone. The Assessor will strive to eliminate discrimination by auditing all policies and procedures to ensure that they do not discriminate and by making any necessary amendments. The Valuation Joint Board will promote equality of opportunity by ensuring that all employees are trained in the promotion of good race relations and our responsibilities under the Race Equality Scheme. Promotion of good relations between people of different racial groups will be achieved by the implementation of good communication strategies, which will ensure active consultation as well as positive initiatives to involve the wider community as consumers of our services.

SPECIFIC DUTIES

We require to formally review and publish an updated Race Equality Scheme every three years which sets out our functions and services relevant to the general duty. This is due by the 30th of November 2005.

In addition, the Valuation Joint Board has to set out its arrangements for :-

- Assessing and consulting on the policies it proposes to adopt
- Monitoring adverse impact of its policies on the promotion of race equality
- Publishing the results of assessments, consultations and monitoring
- Ensuring public access to information and to services
- Training staff in issues relevant to the duty

In order to meet both the general duty and the specific duties of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board has published this Race Equality Scheme. The Scheme is a timetabled and realistic plan, setting out our arrangements for meeting the general and specific duties in terms of race relations. Its aim is to help us eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and promote racial equality.

Race equality will be more relevant to some of our services and functions than others, but, in this context, relevance is about how our actions affect people rather than the number of people they affect. Although minority ethnic communities make up little more than 1% of the population, our functions and policies affect those members of the community directly and indirectly, and are therefore relevant to race equality. The Valuation Joint Board's Race Equality Scheme will help to ensure that citizens and employees will not suffer from direct or indirect discrimination on racial grounds.

HOW WE WILL MEET THE GENERAL DUTY

We will make measured progress in achieving race equality by

- Making sure policies are properly targeted
- Improving our systems to deliver suitable and accessible services to meet the needs of the community
- Increasing confidence in our service
- encouraging us to be more aware of possible problems

HOW WE WILL MEET THE SPECIFIC DUTIES

The Valuation Joint Board has assessed its public services for impact on race equality and has drawn up an action plan for the next three years.

Timetables for action can be found within the Action Plans at Appendix 2 of this document.

MONITORING THE IMPACT OF SERVICES ON DIFFERENT RACIAL GROUPS

- Services provided by the Valuation Joint Board will be monitored on an ongoing basis to check their effects on different racial groups and whether there is any adverse impact on those groups. If changes are required these will be carried out over the three years of the Race Equality Scheme and timescales will be outlined in the Action Plans.

CONSULTATION

Consultation is a priority within the Race Equality Scheme.

As the Assessor's service is too small to attempt to undertake the necessary consultation on its own we have used Clackmannanshire Council – our Joint Board service provider to assist in our consultations.

Assistance in completing this review has been sought and provided by Francine Orr of Clackmannanshire Council.

ENSURING PEOPLE FROM ALL ETHNIC GROUPS HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES

From the contacts provided by the relevant Equal Opportunity Officers in each local authority we have over the last two to three years provided information -

- on the Electoral Services we provide
- the Annual Voter Registration Form (Form A)
- UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament, European Parliament & local authority elections

The 2005 Annual Voter Registration Form has been amended to include a statement in Arabic, Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu & Cantonese that the form is available in these languages.

A contract will be shortly be placed with a translation service to provide a translation service in all languages for all our forms.

We will continue our efforts to ensure people from all groups have access to information on the services we provide.

With the assistance of our local authority contacts we will disseminate information on services and provision throughout the community and take steps to ensure that comments and feedback are taken on board.

The feedback from the consultation exercise will inform service development and delivery and will enable the Valuation Joint Board to evaluate its provision for inclusiveness and accessibility and will inform any necessary amendments in policy or procedure.

EMPLOYEE TRAINING

Employees currently take part in training and awareness raising sessions on a range of equal opportunities issues including our responsibilities under the RAHMAS scheme and training on the Valuation Joint Board's Harassment Policy.

Existing staff will require to attend a training session in January/February 2006 on Race Equality and the Race Equality scheme

Race equality training will form part of all induction packages to ensure that all new staff are aware of the Assessor's commitment to equality of opportunity and the Race Equality Scheme.

Training will be reviewed and updated on an on going basis

The training will be co-ordinated and delivered by Clackmannanshire Council.

MEETING THE SPECIFIC DUTIES UNDER THE ACT IN TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

The Valuation Joint Board is required to monitor employees in the following categories;

- the numbers of staff in post and applicants for employment by racial group
- those who receive training
- those who are promoted within the organisation
- employees who are involved in disciplinary proceedings
- those who leave employment.

Existing monitoring of applicants and the workforce will be extended to cover the new areas. Information collected will be used to assess any differences between racial groups and deal with any unfair or potentially unfair discrimination.

A new employee application form will be developed which through a separate form in the recruitment packs will identify applicant's ethnic backgrounds. This form would not be available to anyone involved in the selection process.

Recruitment applications will be monitored and statistics kept.

Analysis of the results will provide information to inform for any future amendments.

COMMUNICATION

Employees of the Valuation Joint Board will be informed about our progress on Race Equality through in-house communication and through Service Plans and Best Value reviews. The public will be kept informed through focus groups, consultative forums, the RAHMAS partnership, involvement in local voluntary sector organisations and through the press and our website.

Appendix 1

Equal Opportunities Statement

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY STATEMENT

The Valuation Joint Board believes that equality of opportunity should be a guiding principle in all of its activities. The Board is actively working towards the elimination of Policies and Practices which discriminate. It is opposed to any form of discriminatory practices on grounds including:-

- gender
- marital status
- religious belief
- disability
- race
- ethnic origin
- colour
- nationality
- political belief
- sexual orientation
- socio-economic status
- age

We are actively working towards the elimination of all discriminatory practices.

Legal Framework:

The Joint Board is committed to adhering to the principles of domestic legislation as presented in the following Acts:

Equal Pay Act	1970
Sex Discrimination Act	1975
Race Relations Act	1976
Disability Discrimination Act	1995
The Race Relations Amendment Act	2000
The Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations	2003
Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amendment) Regulations	2003
Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations	2003
Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations	2003
Disability Discrimination Act	2005
The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations	2006
Equality Act	2006
The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations	2007

In addition the Joint Board will adhere to European Directives, information on which will be made available on a regular basis.

Updated by Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board 22 nd June, 2007

Applicable to all staff.

Appendix 2

3 Year Action Plan

ASSESSOR & ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER

Service	Function	Action
Policy and Performance		
Policy and Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best value • Service planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2005/2006 • Provide on all forms a translation in 5 major local ethnic languages advising translation available. • Ensure all employees are aware of the Council's arrangements for translation and interpreting • Promote equal opportunities and good race relations through the service planning process • With local authorities assistance continue to try and engage representatives from minority ethnic communities in our business processes. • As part of a customer survey consult representatives from minority ethnic community backgrounds • Review Job application form • Review recruitment and selection guidelines • • 2007/2008 • Evaluate impact of changes

Appendix 2 - 3 Year Action Plan cont'd

ASSESSOR & ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER		
Service	Function	Action
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel • Health & Safety • Equality • Training and Development • Organisational Development 	<p>2005/2006</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the ethnic origin of all job applicants • Ensure that the Valuation Joint Board complies with all aspects of race equality legislation • Deliver race relations training to all staff • Provide briefing sessions on the Race Equality Scheme • Provide briefing sessions on the Board's arrangements for translation and interpreting • Monitor for ethnic origin in all cases of grievance, discipline, harassment and at all exit or leaving interviews • Review the following policies for impact on race relations: Equal Opportunities Policy; Harassment Policy; Training and Development Policy • Review all other employment legislation to ensure that there is no direct or indirect discrimination • Review policies and procedures • Review the following policies for impact on race relations: Managing Leave; Special Leave; Health and Safety Training • Assess corporate impact of Race Equality Scheme • 2007/2008 • Evaluate use of interpreting and translation services •