



Building an inclusive organisation

Audit Commission Diversity Scheme 2002

What is a 'Diversity Scheme'?

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 requires all public authorities to actively promote race equality, and to set out in a publicly available 'Race Equality Scheme' how they will deliver on this vital target. [\(Can we put links in to the relevant bits of Home Office & CRE websites here?\)](#) At the Audit Commission our approach is to develop a Diversity Scheme. Our Scheme focuses specifically on promoting equality around race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age and religious faith, but it has at its heart our goal of building an inclusive organisation that promotes diversity in our products and services. It values difference – of experience, culture and background.

The diversity Scheme is a living and evolving document. It takes forward the approach that Andrew Foster, the Commission's Controller, has stated as:

Good public services are central to civilised society. We want members of diverse communities to have access to and engagement with high quality public services which meet their needs. And for ourselves we are starting, with commitment, on a journey to ensure that at the Commission our workforce reflects the communities we serve.

In this, our first version of the Scheme, we outline what we have already done to promote diversity, using case studies as examples of the kind of initiatives we have undertaken and will build on. Then we provide an action plan for the next three years, describe how we see the Scheme working, how we will review our progress and how our staff can contribute to this work. The Scheme is a practical guide to action, not a perfected and finished strategy document. Loraine Martins, Head of Diversity at the Commission describes the Diversity Scheme as:

Our challenge to ourselves. The Scheme gives a flavour of what we have done already, and what we are planning to do across the whole organisation. We want the Scheme to act as a catalyst for conversations in Regions and Directorates – it's a challenge for all of us to make the Scheme live. We know this work is complex and difficult, and we want to try a brave and bold approach, going beyond what we're required to do in legislation, giving ourselves a general duty to promote diversity. I look forward to hearing your views and ideas about how we progress from here.

The Audit Commission

The Audit Commission promotes the best use of public money by ensuring the proper stewardship of public finances and by helping those responsible for public services to achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Commission was established in 1983 to appoint and regulate the external auditors of local authorities in England and Wales. In 1990 its role was extended to include the NHS. In April 2000, the Commission was given additional responsibility for carrying out best value inspections of certain local government services and functions. Promoting diversity applies to all our functions and policies. **(Box 1).**

Box 1 Statutory Functions

- To appoint auditors to all local government and NHS bodies in England and Wales;
- to set standards for those auditors through the Code of Audit Practice;
- to carry out national studies that are designed to promote economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of local authority and NHS services;
- to define comparative indicators of local authority performance that are published annually (not exercised for 2001/02 and 2002/03);
- to undertake best value and housing inspections; and
- to undertake joint inspections of social services departments with the Social Services Inspectorate and joint inspections of local education authorities with Ofsted.

The Commission covers more than 13000 public bodies, which between them spend £100 billion of public money annually. The Commission is independent and derives most of its income from the fees charged to audited bodies.

Auditors are appointed from District Audit and private accountancy firms to monitor public expenditure. Auditors have responsibilities for assessing expenditure for probity and regularity and value for money. The Commission's value-for-money studies examine public services objectively, often from a users' perspective. Its findings and recommendations are communicated through a wide range of publications and events.

Our vision

Our vision at the Audit Commission is to be a **driving force in the improvement of public services** by promoting proper stewardship and governance and by helping those responsible for public services to achieve effective outcomes for users and the public.

Managing for diversity is central to this vision and to us meeting the four strategic aims of our three year strategy *Delivering Improvement Together*:

- focusing our work on users and the public;
- helping to deliver improvements to public services;
- maximising the benefit and minimising the burden of regulation; and
- modernising ourselves.

We want all sections of the community to have access to and engagement with public services. But we recognise that we need to work on ourselves too. We have set ourselves the goal of becoming an exemplar organisation that promotes diversity in its products and services and values difference. This is an ambitious target given that our strategic approach and investment in diversity work is recent.

We have thought carefully about the challenge that managing for diversity means for the Audit Commission. We are determined to create a working environment that realises the potential of each member of staff and uses their skills and talents to the full. We will increase the diversity of the people we recruit and develop and remain in the forefront of talent tapping the skills of all sections of the community.

Trish Longdon, Director of People development

For the Commission, diversity is much more than just ‘doing the right thing’. It reflects a significant development in our thinking and our approach to equalities. The focus of equal opportunities is fairness – developing policies and practices that tackle inequalities and ensuring that all people are treated fairly. Managing for diversity provides us with an **enhanced** focus – removing barriers and changing institutional behaviours that have a negative impact on particular communities, whilst creating an environment that maximises the potential of each staff member and uses their skills and talents to add value to our work.

Diversity is complex and we are clear that we will not effectively manage for diversity without addressing equality of opportunity. There are key values and core behaviours that we will encourage and promote, creating an environment in which people can exchange opinions and ideas without ‘fear or favour’ and respect each other across differences of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age.

Rising to the challenge

There has always been work on equalities at the Audit Commission, with a range of initiatives and projects in different parts of the family. For example, we have collected performance indicators around equalities for a number of years and have created our own Welsh Language Scheme, approved by the Welsh Language board, that applies to everyone delivering the Commission’s functions in Wales.¹ The Commission has adopted the principle that in the conduct of its public business in Wales, it will treat the English and Welsh languages ‘on the basis of equality’. (please include a link to the Welsh language Scheme in the action plan). But our strategic, family-wide approach to diversity started in earnest last year.

A significant external driver was the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry that brought issues of race relations and the public sector diversity to the fore:

It is incumbent upon every institution to examine their policies and the outcome of their policies and practices to guard against disadvantaging any section of our communities.

Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report 46.27

¹ The Welsh Language Act 1993 requires organisations to make relevant information available in the Welsh Language as well as English.

A catalyst to our own development was the secondment to the Commission of the former Director of Social Services in Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Chris Williams. The Controller, Andrew Foster, and the Director of People Development, Trish Longdon asked Chris to 'hold up a mirror' to the Commission, to reflect back to Commissioners, Management Board and staff a robust and honest picture of our approach to diversity, and to advise us on our future direction. A key outcome of this work was the appointment of Loraine Martins as Head of Diversity to facilitate, support and co-ordinate our efforts.

There are many examples of good practice across the Commission, some of which are outlined later in case studies. But we accept that we need to improve our performance on diversity, and we know that we have a fair way to go before we achieve our goals.

We know for example that:

- Minority ethnic staff are under-represented, particularly in senior posts. Minority ethnic staff represent 6.7 per cent of our total employees. While this compares reasonably well with the 5.7 per cent of minority ethnic people of working age in the UK workforce,^I there are regional variations within the Commission and within that 6.7 per cent, 5 per cent are employed at a junior level;^{II}
- Women are under-represented at senior levels and over-represented at the lowest level;
- We have insufficient information on staff with disabilities within the Commission. Only 40 staff (nearly 2% of our workforce) have told us that they have a disability compared to nearly 20% of people employed in the UK workforce^I and 3.7% of Civil Service staff.^{III}

Chris Williams fed back to us that, like many other institutions, we have a degree of fear and uncertainty about diversity issues and sometimes need reassurance that our ideas are appropriate before taking action. We recognise that we are often perceived as a white, male, middle-class organisation and one with an underdeveloped approach to diversity, but we are ready to learn and make positive changes.

We have set ourselves **4 key diversity objectives**:

- **Leadership** – putting diversity on the agenda from the top of the organisation
- **Inclusivity** – developing a broad and inclusive focus across all equalities issues
- **Mainstreaming** – translating strategy into targets and ensuring that behaviours match vision; and
- **Delivery** – ensuring that activities are co-ordinated, that information is shared and that our priorities are implemented.

I Labour Force Survey Summer 2001

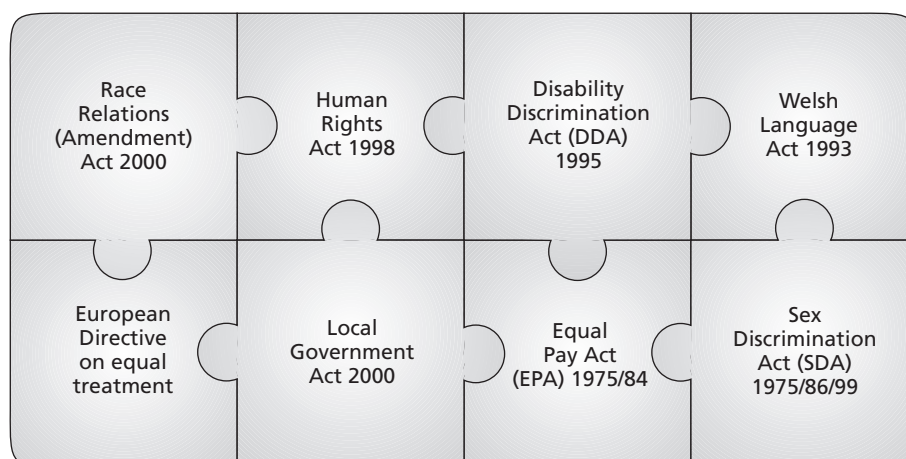
II We have 4 levels of staff grades ranging from level 4 (most junior) to level 1 (most senior)

III For full statistics refer to Equal Opportunities Monitoring Report, Nov 2000 – Oct 2001 ([provide link](#))

Moving from compliance to good practice

There is a complex legislative framework that supports diversity (**Exhibit 1**).

Exhibit 1 – The Legal Context



THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Most of the legislative framework that supports diversity is not new and we have periodically reviewed our policies to comply with the detail and embrace the spirit of legislation. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 gives us new duties. The Act:

- **Outlaws race discrimination in public functions not previously covered by the 1976 Race Relations Act.** For the Audit Commission, this means that we will ensure that as we undertake our audit and inspection functions we will be inspecting public authorities to check whether or not they have race equality Schemes in place, how the Schemes are integrated into overall service delivery and gauge the impact they are having on local communities.
- **Places a general duty on specified public bodies to promote race equality.** This duty will see the Commission improving its focus on race equality through our inspection, audit, information and research functions and through our work with our associates and firms.
- **Requires all public authorities to promote good race relations.** As we work with our clients to improve public services, we will explore how each authority can build positive relations with a range of diverse communities.

A key duty under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 is to publish a race equality Scheme by 31 May 2002, setting out how, as a public body, we will meet these positive duties. However, for us it is not enough just to know about and to comply with the law. Diversity is relevant to all our functions and we are committed to making sure diversity underpins all of our work. All of our policies potentially have an impact on race equality and diversity, and within this context, we will review existing policies and practice and assess the impact of all future policies, to ensure that we do not discriminate against any minority or marginalised group, and that we seize all opportunities to actively promote equality.

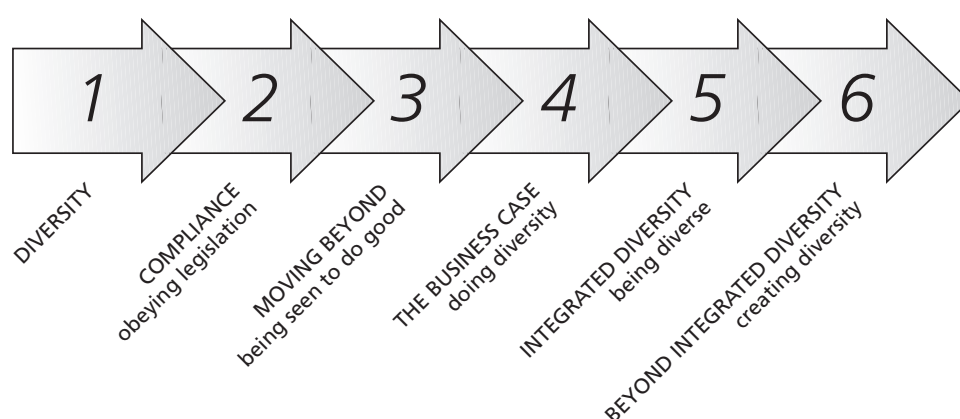
We have set ourselves high standards around diversity and we expect our audit, inspection and research suppliers and contractors to demonstrate the same level of commitment within their tenders. In our action plan we have set targets to monitor the performance of our suppliers on this.

There are a number of different frameworks to support organisations, with the Equality Standard for Local Government¹ a key example. We will be using this framework and other excellence models to help us assess our own performance.

Within our organisation we are at different places along the diversity continuum (**Exhibit 2**) and our goal is to be more consistently at the upper end. We will undertake an audit to more fully understand our current position.

¹ The Equalities Standard for Local Government produced by the CRE, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Disability Rights Commission, the Employers Organisation and the Local Government Association.

Exhibit 2 – Diversity continuum



Meeting the challenge

We have selected a few case studies that illustrate the work already underway to implement our diversity strategy. This Scheme builds on the progress we have made. A more comprehensive list of current projects is included at Appendix 1.

Visible leadership

Diversity within the Commission has received visible support and top level commitment and as is a key theme of our strategy *Delivering Improvement Together*. Our approach has received strong support from Audit Commission Management Board and the Commission.

Managing for diversity involves the Commission in making the same cultural shifts that are expected across all public services.

Andrew Foster, Controller

We know that we are not where we want to be, but we do have a clear sense of direction and leadership commitment. Our aim is to become an exemplar organisation that promotes diversity in our products and services and values difference – in race, gender, age sexuality, disability and faith.

Adrienne Fresko, Acting Chair

Further commitment has been demonstrated with, for example, the Chair and the Controller launching ENRG, by Directors driving initiatives in their own Directorates such as Public Services Research's (PSR's) review of minority ethnic recruits and by People Development's assessment of recruitment practices for disability. The Controller is also signed up to the Campaign for Racial Equality's (CRE's) Leadership Challenge.

The Diversity Strategy was discussed and debated at Board and Commission and sent out to all staff in reader-friendly leaflet format. To maximise ownership across the Commission there was much talking with, and listening to, staff as part of the strategy development process (**Case Study 1**). A key element of the strategy is a dedicated lead resource to take the strategy forward, 'champion' diversity across the Commission and develop our working relationships within the diversity field (Case Study 2). We know that delivering on the diversity agenda is everyone's responsibility, and one of our next challenges is to ensure that staff throughout the organisation are confident and skilled in promoting diversity.

Case Study 1 Developing our Strategy

Talking with, and listening to internal and external stakeholders was key to the approach taken by Chris Williams and the Diversity Project team. We interviewed more than 30 of our senior managers from across the Commission family, as well as around half of the minority ethnic staff employed in our central directorates. We consulted commission staff through the Culture, Style & Process Pulse Group and the Equal Opportunities Representatives group, and held a consultation event for London based staff, and an e-mail consultation for staff in the regions. We worked with ENRG, our staff network for visible minority ethnic groups, and surveyed all minority ethnic staff. Externally, we spoke to the equalities commissions and other key external agencies. The four themes of the Diversity Strategy were directly drawn from these conversations:

I would like to see an inclusive approach to diversity, covering issues which are sometimes overlooked, such as sexual orientation and age

Mainstreaming and consistency are important – considering diversity should be integral to all our processes, and we should use drivers around race equality and user focus as a lever to develop equalities considerations into ‘common currency’ across the Commission.

Performance management is crucial – establishing our ‘starting position’, setting targets, monitoring progress.

We need leadership of the diversity agenda by senior staff, with a senior person responsible for coordinating initiative

Case Study 2 Championing Diversity

The Commission appointed its first Head of Diversity towards the end of last year. Loraine Martins' post has an internal and external focus, promoting diversity issues across the Commission and developing our working relationships in the field. Crucial to our success in this area is developing an understanding of diversity among staff and encouraging ideas and action. With this in mind Loraine has attended a number of regional management team meetings in District Audit, Inspection and MSBU, raising the profile of diversity work, and stimulating some challenging and thought-provoking debate and engagement with the issues.

I think that you instilled a greater awareness about the issues, and I think that a lot of people weren't previously aware of what the move from equality issues to diversity issues really means.

We continued to discuss this (Commission's diversity approach) in the pub ... I feel that there are a number of people (in the Commission) that do not see the point of this and that is why I get so frustrated as if they have attitudes like this, we as an organisation are not going to get very far.

Loraine will continue to meet with and speak regularly to staff, encouraging open and frank discussion. Ultimately each region and directorate will develop its own, local diversity Scheme.

Inclusivity

Creating an inclusive environment is essential to the success of managing diversity. We want the Commission to provide a work setting in which all of our staff are able to give of their best, and develop their potential, and where diverse experiences and perspectives can genuinely enrich what we do. We are aware that our image and some aspects of our current workforce profile give us a strong challenge here. To meet this challenge we have been working on a number of initiatives including:

- supporting flexible working practices such as part-time and term-time working;
- establishing and supporting a number of family-wide networks such as the ethnic network relations group, ENRG (**Case Study 3**), a gay and lesbian network, the disability consultation group and Christians in the Audit Commission (CiTAC), to provide support and champion change;
- commissioning an external review exploring the views of potential minority ethnic staff on the Commission as an employer (**Case Study 4**).

Case Study 3 Supportive networks in the Commission – Ethnic Network Relations Group (ENRG)

ENRG have worked proactively with us to progress our aim of promoting diversity by creating a positive and supportive network, which facilitates the development of confident and motivated minority ethnic colleagues.

Trish Longdon, People Development Director

Following consultations with staff, ENRG was launched in September 2001 with full support from the Board. ENRG's key objectives are:

- to enable 'visible' minority ethnic (VME) staff to share experiences, support one another, and develop to their full potential;
- to act as a forum for positively contributing to ideas for improving equal opportunities and diversity in the organisation, and to add value to our external work;
- to provide a route through which VME staff can contribute to our diversity strategy; and
- to champion equal opportunities & diversity.

There is a direct link to the Director of People Development who feeds information and views to the Board.

At the launch members highlighted important issues and priorities for action that were translated into a 90 day action plan. Our People Development Director, Trish Longdon, gave a commitment that we would deliver on these priorities.

Since then achievements have included:

- Christmas Privilege Day has become a floating Faith Day;
- a Multi Faith calendar has been sent to all staff to raise awareness with staff encouraged to consult it before setting meeting dates
- an agreed use of rooms for religious observance
- input into the development of diversity criteria for inspections and external facing work
- development of an ENRG recruitment leaflet and participation in recruitment fairs
- the inauguration of the Opportunities Mentoring Programme for minority ethnic staff
- identification of trends and issues from monitoring and members' feedback
- participation in research undertaken to establish reasons for under-representation of minority ethnic staff in the Commission.

Case Study 3 continued

Ethnic minorities working within AC family have without doubt demonstrated their desire to meet the challenge of promoting diversity in the workplace. ENRG has been one vehicle established by its members to (a) support each other and (b) to work together with the ACIDA to harness the diverse benefits, that can be accrued from the ethnic minorities community whom it employs and serves.

Through the Audit Commission diversity programme, ENRG has assisted me in my career progression which will ultimately help me achieve my true potential, and I am sure it can do the same for anyone who gives it the support that it deserves.

ENRG a source of strength and expertise providing invaluable support, enabling you with a positive attitude to move forward under a constrained environment.

Case study 4 The Commission as an employer

We commissioned Focus Consultancy to explore the causes of under-representation of minority ethnic staff in our Public Service Research directorate, and to explore recruitment issues in Joint Reviews and District Audit.

Focus spoke to 53 people about their image of the Audit Commission as an employer of black staff. Most of the respondents were aware of the Commission, and thought our work was professional, thorough and valuable. However, they viewed our workforce as "very white", "male dominated", made up of "people of a middle class background" with "previous senior management experience in the public sector", and our culture as "not diverse", "quite bureaucratic", "a closed community" and "exclusive".

A key message from this piece of work is that the genuineness of the Commission's commitment to ethnic diversity is invisible to many respondents. Although some regarded the Focus project itself as a positive step towards change, many respondents are looking for evidence of commitment beyond what they see as 'the standard line' in a job advert:

The people the Commission is trying to attract know what the deal is. You can't do this in a half-hearted way – the Commission needs to go for it hook, line and sinker if it wants to see a real difference.

We are committed to making full use of the honest views that participants were generous enough to give us. A cross-functional action team is meeting to work through the issues and questions this exercise raises for us as an employer.

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming diversity throughout our services and processes is critical if we are to ensure that our behaviours reflect the goals we have set ourselves.

Stakeholders also have a right to expect the Commission to mainstream equalities into our work programme. Our commitment to this is illustrated by our Welsh Language Scheme (**Case Study 5**).

Translating our corporate goals into targets cascaded through directorate business plans to individual performance targets will also help, as will making our products and services relevant to the communities and agencies we serve and sharing knowledge and promoting good practice through networking (**Case Study 6**).

Mainstreaming diversity also presents some significant challenges, in part because in the past equalities work has been either time-limited or seen as an addition to 'the day-job', and in part because to do it well means tangible changes in behaviours and attitudes. We know from experience that changing attitudes is not easy. Real success will only be demonstrated when our commitment to diversity becomes integral to the way we all work.

Case Study 5 Welsh Language Scheme

The creation of the National Assembly for Wales has been a catalyst for changes to the framework within which public services operate in Wales, and the Audit Commission is committed to responding to, and supporting, that change agenda. The Commission's Welsh Language Scheme was developed to comply with the Welsh Language Act 1993 and forms part of that wider strategy to ensure that the Commission's services are relevant in Wales.

In engaging with the public in Wales, the Commission is committed to the principle that the Welsh and English languages should be treated on an equal basis, and our Welsh Language Scheme sets out how we do this. The Scheme is about more than translation and providing bilingual publications, and includes:

- **The Commission's public face in Wales** – providing a bilingual corporate identity to the general public.
- **Dealing with the Welsh-speaking public** – ensuring that the public, audited bodies and other stakeholders can communicate with the Commission and its auditors and inspectors in Welsh.
- **Service planning and delivery** – ensuring that the Welsh language is considered when formulating new policies and delivering services. We are not responsible for "policing" the Welsh Language Act but mainstreaming a Welsh language dimension into audit, inspection and research methodology is a unique feature of the Audit Commission in Wales.

Colleagues from across the Directorates within the Audit Commission support the monitoring of the Scheme, and we have performance indicators. We also report annually to the Welsh Language Board on our achievements against the Scheme.

Case Study 6 Sharing knowledge and promoting good practice

A Diversity Knowledge Network has been established across the Commission family to influence, enable and help in delivering the organisation's diversity strategy. The network aims to do this by:

- sharing knowledge and learning from thinking to date on equalities and diversity work;
- familiarising ourselves with the current equalities agenda and its implications for audit, inspection and research;
- providing a 'sounding board' for Commission staff for commentaries on work that contains equalities and diversity elements;
- developing and commissioning Commission products and tools;
- influencing and contributing to the Commission's business planning cycle; and
- proposing future events/information dissemination/training to help ensure diversity becomes firmly embedded as a core value in the Commission's work.

The network meets on a quarterly basis and members include auditors, inspectors and researchers. The group is chaired by our Head of Diversity and is sponsored by a member of ACMB. Sessions held to date have been interactive and many have commented on how rewarding and useful they have been. The network in its short life has already developed a checklist for equalities, diversity and user focus in our work with local government. The checklist is currently being piloted across audit and inspection

Delivery

We want to be at the forefront of contributing to the diversity debate across public services and we know we have some way to go to get to that point. It is not enough for us to simply set challenging objectives and targets. We need also to ensure that we deliver on these. Our Scheme has already highlighted some of our current projects. In addition we have embarked on a number of other initiatives and are encouraging staff locally to identify their own areas for improvement. These include:

- The Commission has employed Windsor Fellows for several years. We have built on this recently with the Public Services Research (PSR) directorate recruiting minority ethnic trainees through a positive action programme (**Case Study 7**);
- A District Audit (DA) Scheme working with disability groups to attract disabled applicants and a review of accommodation to understand how well we cater for the needs of disabled staff;

- Introducing an opportunities mentoring Scheme for minority ethnic staff **(Case Study 8)**.
- Introducing a range of flexible working arrangements;
- Using specialist search consultants to encourage a range of applicants and a balanced shortlist for targeted posts.

Case Study 7 Positive action programme

As part of the Commission's diversity strategy, PSR designed and implemented a Positive Action Research Traineeship as one way to help us to address under-representation of research staff from minority ethnic groups within the Directorate.

The programme was designed in partnership with the Windsor Fellowship and the overall aim is to increase the diversity of our workforce by:

- providing pre-recruitment training for minority ethnic people; and
- giving trainees an insight into working as a researcher within PSR.

We designed the programme in a way which ensured that all trainees would be fully equipped to compete with other applicants for researcher posts at future assessment centres. A key element is support on an approved part-time MSc in Social Research Methods through day release.

Rather than advertise in the standard way we decided to make presentations at ten universities and to e-mail the Windsor Fellowships database; this took place in February and March of this year. This approach enabled us to meet many potential candidates face to face. Attendance at the presentations varied in numbers from 2 to 60 people. Many of the people we met said that they thought the Scheme was a 'fantastic opportunity' and that it showed that the organisation 'was serious about diversity'.

By the closing date we had 77 applications, 21 of which we invited to interviews and assessments. There was a shortlist of 11 excellent people for second interview, and we had great difficulty in deciding on the final three. Offers were made to the final three in mid April and all accepted.

The trainees will be joining us in September 2002

Case Study 8 Opportunities mentoring Scheme

The Commission's new Opportunities Mentoring Programme (OMP) supports the Commission's diversity strategy. Its key aims/measures are:

- to aid recruitment and retention of minority ethnic staff;
- to support progression of minority ethnic staff into senior management grades; and
- to help to increase representation of minority ethnic staff at senior levels.

Mentees are minority ethnic staff who are paired with Mentors from a variety of grades, job roles and backgrounds in the Commission. The formal relationship is set to run for twelve months. Initial reactions have been very positive.

I applied to participate in the OM programme because I saw it as an opportunity to further develop my communications skills by learning from an experienced practitioner. I was fortunate in finding a mentor who had significant experience in this area and was willing to share their learning with me. (Mentee)

I was very pleased to get the chance to participate in the Commission's pilot OMP Scheme. We talk about diversity and development a lot around here, so I think the Commission deserves a lot of credit for introducing a tangible, well-planned, financially supported initiative to address these issues. It feels good to be a part of that. Secondly, I suspect that being a moderately useful mentor will be a tough job, and development opportunities like that don't come along every day. (Mentor)

The mentoring relationship has enabled two-way learning, addressing a learning need for my mentor, which was to learn about equalities in the employment cycle, experience which I am able to share. (Mentee)

It's great to work in an organisation which is willing to recognise and invest in a range of development mechanisms – OMP being one! (Mentee)

Some staff from majority communities thought that the programme was unfair and divisive. We explained why we had chosen to prioritise mentoring for minority ethnic staff as positive action to redress existing imbalances in our staffing profile. We also realised that we needed to communicate everyone's potential to access mentoring through the PDP process.

Early learning and feedback from those in the programme has been positive, and the number of high quality Mentors that came forward means that we can set up a bank of trained Mentors and bring phase two of the programme forward by six months to commence in September 2002.

Future priorities – the action plan

Our Action Plan is a working document. We have set out key corporate priorities, with actions for each main group, for diversity as a whole, and then by type of initiative - policy, training and development. For some priorities we can identify actions across the three-year life of this Scheme; for others, Year 2 and 3 actions will flow from the evaluation of our activities in Year 1. We believe that getting conditions right for one group or area of work will lead to positive spin-offs for all, and by looking at the whole diversity dimension we are challenging ourselves to improve in each area. We also believe that to genuinely mainstream diversity, we need a matrix of actions with clear central leadership and actions tailored to specific local circumstances, led by departments, directorates and regions. We have set some initial targets for work that can be driven from the corporate centre, and invite your comments and views. We have also set a target for the development of departmental, directorate and regional diversity Schemes.

Priorities and targets will be reviewed and developed against consultation responses to this Scheme, and over time.

Employment

Over the next three years we will see a decrease in levels of recruitment of new staff, and our staff turnover is low. We acknowledge that this will mean that changes in our workforce profile will be incremental. In this context, our focus will be to develop diversity initiatives with our existing staff, making sure that we have transparent policies which enable a diverse range of staff to develop experience and expertise across the organisation. Much of our efforts will be aimed at building on our untapped or under-used resources of skill and experience. And we need staff to tell us if we're getting it right.

Service Delivery

The next three years will see us continuing to focus on the strategic targets outlined in *Delivering Improvement Together*, implementing the outcomes of our Organisational Development review, responding positively and constructively to changes in the health and social care regulation regime, delivering Comprehensive Performance Assessments in Local Government, and increasing our work in criminal justice. Our focus will be to ensure that diversity is fully embedded in our key processes and priorities.

Theme	Year 1 (2002-03)	Year 2 (2003-04)	Year 3 (2004-05)	Measures & targets	Lead
RACE					
Recruitment and progression of minority ethnic staff	Establish a succession pool of staff from minority ethnic communities Report progress against CD target Establish local targets Review findings of Focus consultancy exercise, and agree plan & targets	Review pool and develop secondees from external organisations Report progress against all targets	Report progress against all targets Evaluate policy and impact Refresh policy	+3% annual increase in posts at Levels 1- 3 filled by staff from minority communities	People Development
Provision of reports and information in a range of community languages	Develop approach to community language reporting Develop criteria for using translators and interpreters Pilot new approaches	Review pilots and develop policy Implement policy	Report progress against targets Evaluate impact on a range of communities Refresh policy approach	Policy development milestones Policy targets	Cross-Directorate Project team
Cultural Awareness	Review Commission dress code to ensure staff can chose to wear own traditional clothing wherever possible Issue 2003 Multifaith Calendar of Festivals to all staff Post short briefings on Intranet on key dates	Review impact of initiatives via Networks and/or annual staff survey Issue 2004 Multifaith Calendar of Festivals to all staff	Issue 2005 Multifaith Calendar of Festivals to all staff	Intranet site hits Impact on staff awareness	Head of Diversity
Work shadowing opportunities with minority ethnic communities	Audit existing shadowing opportunities across the Commission family Formalise policy	Report progress and review policy Set local targets Explore shadowing opportunities with partner organisation/s	Report progress against targets Pilot partnership shadowing Scheme	25% of London-based shadowing opportunities are filled by people from minority ethnic communities Local targets set (Year 2) and met (Year 3)	People Development Departments, Directorates & Regions
Opportunities Mentoring Programme	Evaluate programme Set new target for mentee numbers, & progression target	Report progress against targets Refresh targets	Report progress against targets Refresh targets	Year-on-year increase in mentee places Programme evaluation Progression targets	People Development
ENRG	Continue corporate support to ENRG	Continue corporate support to ENRG	Continue corporate support to ENRG	Network feedback	ENRG Chair/Director of People Development
CRE Leadership Challenge	Review progress against criteria when relaunched Challenge is published Agree action plan to fill gaps	CRE Review visit Agree action to fill any identified gaps		CRE Review	Head of Diversity

Theme	Year 1 (2002-03)	Year 2 (2003-04)	Year 3 (2004-05)	Measures & targets	Lead
Minority ethnic graduate recruitment	Evaluate Positive Action Traineeship recruitment & induction Continue Windsor Fellowship programme	Evaluate Positive Action Trainees' progression Continue Windsor Fellowship programme	Continue Windsor Fellowship programme	Number of PATs joining permanent staff Feedback from Windsor Fellows & their managers	PSR/People Development
GENDER					
Recruitment and progression for women in senior positions	Establish a succession pool of women for senior positions Report progress against CD target Establish local targets	Review pool and develop secondees from external organisations Report progress against all targets	Report progress against all targets Evaluate policy and impact Refresh policy	+ 10% annual increase in posts at Levels 1 and 2 filled by women	People Development
Mentoring programme for women	Establish mentoring programme for women	Evaluate programme Set new target for mentee numbers, & progression target	Report progress against targets Refresh targets	Year-on-year increase in mentee places Programme evaluation Progression targets	People Development
Work shadowing opportunities for women	Audit existing shadowing opportunities across the Commission family Formalise policy	Report progress and review policy Set local targets Explore shadowing opportunities with partner organisation/s	Report progress against targets Pilot partnership shadowing Scheme	50% of Central Directorate shadowing opportunities are filled by women Local targets set (Year 2) and met (Year 3)	People Development Departments, Directorates & Regions
Network for women staff	Explore the potential for network for women staff			% of women staff joining network Network feedback	Head of Diversity
Establish 'bring your daughters to work' day	First Day Review & evaluate			% of relevant staff participating Staff feedback	Head of Diversity
DISABILITY					
Recruitment and progression of disabled staff	Project work with the Employer's Forum and with disability consultancies on disability awareness Maintain Positive Disability Recruitment Scheme	Develop succession pool of disabled staff and set targets Maintain Positive Disability Recruitment Scheme	Review progress against targets Evaluate policy approach Maintain Positive Disability Recruitment Scheme	Year-on-year increase in disabled staff at all Levels PDRS accreditation	People Development
Mentoring programme for disabled staff	Establish mentoring programme for disabled staff	Evaluate programme Set new target for mentee numbers, & progression target	Report progress against targets Refresh targets	Year-on-year increase in mentee places Programme evaluation Progression targets	People Development

Theme	Year 1 (2002-03)	Year 2 (2003-04)	Year 3 (2004-05)	Measures & targets	Lead
Work shadowing opportunities for disabled people	Audit existing shadowing opportunities across the Commission family Formalise policy	Report progress and review policy Set local targets Explore shadowing opportunities with partner organisation/s	Report progress against targets Pilot partnership shadowing Scheme	5% of Central Directorate shadowing opportunities are filled by disabled people Local targets set (Year 2) and met (Year 3)	People Development Departments, Directorates & Regions
Improving access	Audit existing access and equipment arrangements in Vincent Square & Greycoat Street Introduce equipment to improve access to the Commission ie minicoms	Audit existing access and equipment arrangements in Regional offices Introduce equipment to improve access			Operations Regional Offices
Disability Consultation Group	Continue corporate support to DCG	Continue corporate support to DCG	Continue corporate support to DCG	DCG feedback	Chair of DCG/Director of People Development
RELIGION					
Respecting all faiths	Issue 2003 Multifaith Calendar of Festivals to all staff Post short briefings on Intranet on key dates	Review responsiveness of work environment via Networks and/or annual staff survey Issue 2004 Multifaith Calendar of Festivals to all staff	Issue 2005 Multifaith Calendar of Festivals to all staff	Intranet site hits Impact on staff awareness	Head of Diversity
Faith Networks	Continue corporate support to CitAC Respond to requests for support for other faith networks	Continue corporate support to CitAC Respond to requests for support for other faith networks	Continue corporate support to CitAC Respond to requests for support for other faith networks	Network/s feedback	Network/s Chair/s/Director of People Development
SEXUAL ORIENTATION					
A positive working environment for lesbian and gay staff	Join Stonewall Diversity Champions Scheme Establish benchmark data on perceptions of work environment among lesbian and gay staff and set targets Support set up of Lesbian & Gay Staff Network Explore potential for monitoring sexual orientation in job applications	Review work environment via staff attitude survey and Network Report progress against targets		Network feedback Staff attitude survey Work environment targets	Head of Diversity

Theme	Year 1 (2002-03)	Year 2 (2003-04)	Year 3 (2004-05)	Measures & targets	Lead
Network for Lesbians & Gay Men	Support set up of Lesbian & Gay Staff Network			% of estimated lesbian & gay staff joining network Gender balance of Network Network feedback	Head of Diversity
AGE					
A positive working environment for staff of all ages	Establish benchmark data on perceptions of work environment among younger and older staff and set targets Develop external links with different 'age' networks Review retirement age and pension arrangements	Review work environment via staff attitude survey Report progress against targets Keep retirement age under review		Staff attitude survey Work environment targets	Head of Diversity
LANGUAGE					
Welsh language Scheme	Continue Scheme	Continue Scheme	Continue Scheme	WLS progress reports	AC in Wales
DIVERSITY					
Publish a National Report on a major diversity issue	Consult on topic and begin research	Complete research and publish report	Evaluate impact	Research milestones Post-publication evaluation	Public Services Research
Policy impact	Develop Impact Assessment methodology and Statement Initial policy screen	Impact assessment of Priority A policies	Impact assessment of Priority B policies	% of policies assessed	ACMB
Diversity in recruitment & selection	Monitor compliance with targets fair recruitment training of interviewers, and inclusion of equalities questions, and information in recruitment packs Report progress against targets, and agree action plan to fill gaps	Report progress against targets, and agree action plan to fill gaps	Report progress against targets, and agree action plan to fill gaps	All interviewers have attended training All interviews include a diversity question Recruitment packs include diversity information	People Development
Complaints	Review complaints for diversity content Identify action needed, and lead responsibility	Review complaints for diversity content Identify action needed, and lead responsibility	Review complaints for diversity content Identify action needed, and lead responsibility	Complaints monitoring	Complaints Lead

Theme	Year 1 (2002-03)	Year 2 (2003-04)	Year 3 (2004-05)	Measures & targets	Lead
Equal Opportunities Representatives	Continue support & training for EORs Review name Benchmark awareness of EORs among staff	Continue support & training for EORs	Continue support & training for EORs	EOR group feedback Staff attitude survey Use of EOR resource	People Development
Diversity Knowledge Network	Network priorities identified External evaluation of Knowledge Network initiative			External evaluation Network feedback	Head of Diversity
Service Delivery checklists	Evaluate use of diversity and user focus checklists for audit, inspection and research			Audit of checklist use	District Audit APA ACIS PSR AC Knowledge Steering Group
Audit, Inspection & Research Suppliers	Audit of diversity focus in contracting procedures, ensuring our procurement policy includes compliance with RRAA Monitor and report	Monitor and report	Monitor and report	Consistent criteria in all contracting procedures	Operations PSR APA District Audit ACIS
FLEXIBLE WORKING					
Formalise part-time network	Establish a forum for part-time staff to improve performance on flexible working	Publicise flexible working opportunities New ways of working identified		Increase in number of staff choosing to work flexibly year on year Improved range of flexible working practices	People Development
POLICIES					
Develop methodologies e.g. CPA to include RRAA, human rights, gender and disability,	Develop integrated methodologies that support the inspection of diversity – CPA, checklists for local government, health and criminal justice work	Pilot criminal justice methodologies. Pilot health methodologies Consolidate CPA framework		Diversity issues mainstreamed into all our methodologies	Sector lead Directors of Local Government, Health and Criminal Justice
Develop new code of practice in Housing	Work with CRE to revise current code of practice in Housing, to reflect the RRAA			New code issues	Director of Inspection

Theme	Year 1 (2k2)	Year 2 (2k3)	Year 3 (2k4)	Measures & targets	Lead
TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT					
Develop competencies on diversity and user focus	Review performance management systems to include diversity competencies	Introduce diversity competencies throughout the organisation	Review competencies and monitor performance	Year on year improvement on diversity competencies assessed through PDP	People Development
Diversity Awareness Programme	Undertake training needs analysis. Create a rolling programme of training and development for staff Deliver 'Managing change for diversity' programme across the family Pilot disability awareness training in HR	Deliver training Integrate diversity dimensions in core training modules Extend disability awareness training across the Commission	Review of training analysis Identification of developing training	Increased diversity awareness across the organisation Improved working with a range of local communities Enhanced user focus	People Development
Diversity Audit/Equalities Standard	Pilot a diversity audit of the Commission which may be based on the Equalities Standard, and other models	Use information from audit to review diversity Scheme and strategy and develop improvement plan	Produce new Scheme and audit cycle	Audit completed Action plan agreed Progress monitored	ACMB
Monitoring	Publish monitoring report and stats Involve Networks in reviewing statistics and pointers for areas of improvement			Quarterly review of data by ACMB Annual report to Commission	ACMB + AC

Checking back

Monitoring and evaluating performance against our objectives is critical to our understanding of whether we have delivered or not. It also helps to ensure that our objectives remain relevant and challenging.

We currently monitor recruitment and leaver statistics by race, gender, disability and age and report these statistics annually in our equal opportunities monitoring report (link to be made to report on web). We recognise that we need to develop this monitoring information further to include, for example:

- regional breakdowns by ethnicity, disability and gender;
- breakdown of part-time work patterns by ethnicity, disability and gender;
- breakdown of grievances, disciplinary action, promotion and access to training and complaints by ethnicity, disability and gender; and
- divisional recruitment monitoring reports.

We will also be making this information more readily available on our website.

We have set out our future priorities and timescales for delivery above. Over the next 6 months we intend to translate these priorities into individual departmental action plans against which delivery can be reviewed and evaluated. Your input will be critical to this evaluation process (See 'Having your say' below). Progress will be reported quarterly to the Director of People Development, and 6-monthly to ACMB and the Commission. We expect each directorate/region to develop local Schemes as an inclusive team exercise and keep the Head of Diversity informed about progress on a regular basis. The objectives of local Schemes will be cascaded down to individuals within their PMS targets. We will also be developing competencies in diversity and user focus, and these will be a key element of the competency assessment process. We will also consult you on the best ways of keeping you up to date with developments across the Commission, in addition to placing ACMB progress reports on the intranet.

Having your say

It is important that you feel ownership of our diversity Scheme. The Scheme is neither a static document nor an end in itself. It has been developed to reflect our approach to diversity, an approach that needs to be flexible to respond to external influences and to our own changing internal environment. We want to hear from you and for you to input to, and help to shape, our Scheme. We also welcome external views and will be actively seeking feedback from the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission, Stonewall, the Employers Forum, the Local Government Association, national minority ethnic voluntary organisations and other key agencies.

Consulting internally

In developing this Scheme the project team consulted widely. We met with the diversity knowledge network, ENRG, the Gay & Lesbian network steering group and Equal Opportunity Representatives, and we briefed our diversity champions.

This Scheme is available on our Intranet. Everyone is encouraged to read the document during June and July and consider what it means for you as individuals and for your teams and departments. You can feedback in a number of ways:

- through an electronic form on the intranet – this will allow you to input anonymously if you wish;
- through your Equal Opportunity Representative and/or diversity champion;
- by directly e-mailing comments to Loraine; and
- through existing networks and groups – ENRG, the Gay and Lesbian group, CitAC and the diversity knowledge network.

There will be no cut off point for feedback – the Scheme will be regularly reviewed and will evolve over time. Loraine Martins will be briefing people regularly during the year on diversity issues and you are encouraged to take up opportunities presented by these briefings to comment on our Scheme. We have already begun briefing on the Race Relations (Amendment) Act with the Inspection service, and we have briefed ‘champions’ to cascade key information about the Act in their region or directorate.

However, we want to do more than this and to intend to integrate into our staff surveys questions concerning:

- the level of awareness of the Scheme;
- your views on how the approach affects you and your work; and
- what more we can do to promote diversity issues internally and externally.

We developed our approach to diversity in dialogue with staff. Loraine is fully committed to taking on board your views and taking appropriate action. The Diversity Scheme will be updated to reflect progress and changes and will be frequently reviewed to see what further improvements can be made.

External communication

We welcome views from the public and other external organisations. This Scheme is available in hard copy on request and can be downloaded from the Audit Commission website. Comments should be sent to:

Loraine Martins, Head of Diversity
Audit Commission, 1 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PN

or e-mailed to:

lo-martins@audit-commission.gov.uk

Developing our capacity

Having outlined a range of on-going activities and initiatives, it is important that we address our own competence and capacity to deliver this agenda. For many of us this will be a new area of work, some of us will have had little exposure to diverse communities, or only come into contact with a limited range of diversity issues. We may hold negative stereotypes about particular people and lifestyles. While all staff receive equal opportunities training in their induction package, we recognise that we need to ensure that our approach to training is regularly reviewed and refreshed.

We already know that we are on variable points of the diversity continuum and as we undertake the briefings on the RRAA, review feedback on the Scheme, and work with staff networks, we will refine our analysis of the training needs across the Commission. We will use this analysis to develop a comprehensive range of training and development opportunities, from basic awareness-raising to the most sophisticated level.

We will shortly begin to pilot 'managing change for diversity' and disability awareness programmes. If successful, the programmes will be made available across the organisation and will help you to develop the competencies you need .

We believe that we have set ourselves an ambitious agenda by looking at all aspects of diversity. As we develop confidence and capacity we will become more sophisticated in our approach, we will challenge each other constructively and learn from each other, and from external clients and partners. We have not chosen the easy route - but we believe we have chosen the route that will allow us to fulfil our vision and reach our potential to add significant value to the public sector diversity agenda.

APPENDIX 1 EXISTING ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

Activities & Achievements to date	Race Equality	Gender	Disabilities	Sexual Orientation	Age	Religion	General or Other
Leadership							
Diversity Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Diversity Scheme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Creation of Head of Diversity post	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inclusivity							
Disability Consultation Group			✓				
Ethnic Network Relations Group	✓						
Gay and Lesbian network				✓			
Christians in the Audit Commission						✓	
External review exploring the views of potential minority ethnic employees	✓						
PSR research on good practice in equalities							✓
Equal Opportunities Representatives	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

