

Diversity and Equality policy

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Introduction

Audit Scotland is committed to eliminating discrimination, valuing and promoting equality and diversity amongst our workforce and will work towards increasing the diversity of our employees. It is our policy to treat all job applicants and employees fairly and equitably regardless of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment status, marriage or civil partnership status, maternity or pregnancy, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation¹.

We will strive to take a leading role in advancing equal opportunities practices and diversity both as an employer and in our auditing role. In relation to employment, this policy statement applies to recruitment and selection, promotion, training, terms and conditions of employment, pay and benefits and every other aspect of employment, including general treatment at work and the processes involved in the cessation of employment.

This policy applies to all to job applicants (internal and external), employees, secondees, agency staff, clients, suppliers and contractors, whether permanent or temporary.

Audit Scotland will do all it reasonably can to promote good practice in this area in order to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and promote good relations.

Audit Scotland aims to be an organisation which is broadly representative of the communities it serves. We will demonstrate our commitment by:

- Ensuring diversity and equality is at the heart of policy-making and taking a lead role in demonstrating best practice.
- Actively promoting equality of opportunity through circulating recruitment vacancy details as widely as possible and monitoring our recruitment practices.

¹These characteristics are called 'protected characteristics' as defined by The Equality Act 2010. Audit Scotland considers Disability under the social model of disability. We recognise that it is often the barriers in society that exclude people with disabilities, rather than individual impairments and conditions.

- Treating all our employees with respect and equality of opportunity in order that their selection and subsequent development is based entirely on merit.
- Creating a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for all. No form of discrimination², bullying, harassment or victimisation will be tolerated against any current or prospective employee on the grounds of their age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, maternity or pregnancy, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation.
- Raising employee awareness about equality and valuing diversity and enabling managers to promote and be accountable for equality of opportunity through 3D developmental discussion and training for all employees.
- Positively valuing the different attributes, perspectives and skills of employees and making full use of these.
- Putting in place any reasonable adjustments to the job or working conditions for a disabled colleague or prospective employee.

Recruitment and selection

We will carefully consider whether vacancies should be advertised internally or externally. Where externally advertised, we are committed to developing and monitoring our recruitment and employment policies to ensure they are accessible to all sections of the community.

When establishing criterion for recruitment into vacant posts, we will consider carefully what is relevant and necessary for the effective performance of the job. Criterion will not be imposed unless there is a proper job-based reason why they are necessary.

All job applicants will be asked to complete an online diversity monitoring section including details of their age, disability, ethnic origin, sex and race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation³. Audit Scotland guarantees the information provided will be used solely for the purposes of monitoring the effectiveness of our diversity and equality policy and will be kept confidential by the Human Resources (HR) team.

All managers involved in any form of recruitment or selection will first complete recruitment and selection training, which includes a dedicated diversity and equality module. Our separate on-line diversity [training package](#) for managers also provides practical examples of diversity and

² The non-discrimination principle in this policy includes the prohibition of discrimination against an individual because they associate with someone with a protected characteristic, for example, an employee who is married to someone from a minority ethnic group. It applies equally to situations where someone thinks or perceives (rightly or wrongly) that a colleague has a particular protected characteristic e.g. they are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment or have a disability.

³ This is voluntary and includes a “prefer not to say” option.

equality issues in relation to recruitment and selection. Members of the HR team work closely with managers at all stages of the recruitment process, advising and supporting them on good practice and helping with individual questions that arise.

Monitoring

We are committed to our monitoring requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and meeting our general and specific duties under this act.

To ensure accuracy in our reporting, employees are asked to update their diversity information annually. This includes details of their protected characteristics including disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation. We guarantee that the information provided will be used solely for the purpose of monitoring the effectiveness of our diversity and equality policy and will be held securely.

All business groups have representatives on the Equality and Human Rights Steering Group (EHRSG). This group is responsible for our Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming reporting, a full report is produced every four years. Annual reporting is carried out on equality and diversity across our workforce and recruitment activity by the HR team.

This reporting information is used to promote discussion and inform future policy and enhance business processes.

Further information on what information we ask employees to provide and how we use it can be found in Appendix One.

Our diversity policies and network groups

Audit Scotland has a number of diversity policies in place, including an equal pay policy statement, religion and belief observance policy, gender reassignment policy, and bullying and harassment policy.

Any employee can use the bullying and harassment or grievance policies to complain about discriminatory conduct. Audit Scotland is keen to ensure that all employees feel comfortable about raising such complaints. Employees should be able to raise a concern in the knowledge that their complaint will not be held against them unless it is made in bad faith e.g. out of malice. All diversity policies can be accessed through our staff handbook.

There are also a variety of employee network groups which can provide guidance and support to colleagues where requested. For example our Disability Confident working group, our Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage group and our LGBTQ+ group. Details of the groups available can be found on our [intranet site here](#).

Disability Confident employer

Audit Scotland has received accreditation as a Disability Confident employer (Level 2) under the Disability Confident scheme, awarded by the Department for Work and Pensions. We have made an ongoing

commitment to recruitment, retention and development of employees with disabilities.

A disability is a physical or mental impairment which has an adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. A more detailed definition can be found in the Equality Act 2010.

Employees who have a disability or health condition or who become disabled in the course of their employment are encouraged to inform HR. This is voluntary but participation will help Audit Scotland monitor and improve our policies and working practices. Any information provided is held in confidence and cannot be seen by line managers, although sharing this information with line managers is encouraged to ensure the right support is put into place.

Under the Equality Act 2010, we have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to the job or working conditions for a disabled colleague or prospective employee. Some examples include:

- adjustments to the workplace to improve access or layout; moving tasks to more accessible areas;
- giving some of the disabled person's duties to another person;
- getting new or adapting existing equipment, eg chairs, desks, computers;
- modifying instructions or procedures, eg by providing in bigger text or Braille;
- improving communication, eg providing a reader or interpreter, having visual as well as audible alarms; and
- changes to working hours, location or working patterns.

Employees can discuss any reasonable adjustments they require with HR or their line manager and are encouraged to suggest any adjustments that they believe would be helpful. Careful consideration will be given to any proposals and, where reasonable, such adjustments will be made.

Personal counselling is also available to all Audit Scotland employees. This can help with a broad range of individual and/or social situations, for example, dealing with physical pain, depression or stress. More details can be found in our Occupational Health and Wellbeing policy.

Audit Scotland is committed to supporting employees who become disabled in the course of their employment to enable them to continue in their current job or a suitable alternative post.

Employee Training

All employees will receive training in diversity and equality of opportunity as a part of their induction. Further training and development is available to all employees as part of our rolling programme of learning across Audit Scotland.

Every person working for Audit Scotland has a personal responsibility for implementing and promoting diversity and equality principles in their day to day dealings with clients and with each other.

Retirement

Audit Scotland does not operate any compulsory retirement age, and each employee may choose for themselves when to stop working, subject to them continuing to be fit to perform their job to a satisfactory standard.

Appendix One

Why do you want my diversity information and what information do Audit Scotland ask for?

We currently ask you to provide information on your:

- Age
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Sex
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Nationality
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation.

These characteristics (alongside maternity or pregnancy) are covered under the Equality Act 2010 as protected characteristics. The Act bans unfair treatment of people because of a protected characteristic they have.

Why do you want my information and how will you use it?

We want to ensure our practices, systems and policies are not directly or indirectly treating people unfairly. Therefore, each year we produce a report which includes an analysis of employee information (the latest report is available from the Audit Scotland website).

We also produce an equal pay review showing pay gap differences (our latest report is also available on our website). Under the public sector equality duty, we have a legal obligation to gather information on our employees, particularly in relation to recruitment, development and retention across all of the protected characteristics.

We must use the information to better perform the equality duty⁴ and publish a report to show a breakdown of information and details of the progress we have made in gathering and using this information.

We are also required to produce gender pay gap information showing the percentage difference between male and female average pay.

Example:

If our analysis showed a significant difference in the pay between men and women doing work of equal value or a lower proportion of minority ethnic group applicants were making it through our selection processes, then we would examine this further and take action as appropriate.

Why should I tell you about my religion or sexual orientation? It has nothing to do with my job.

We understand that this information is particularly personal and sensitive and you may not want to share it with us. However, we want to ensure our practices, systems and policies are fair and non-discriminatory. If we want to be able to do this, we need your information. Therefore, we encourage you to share your details.

What will happen if I disclose a disability?

If you indicate you have a disability, HR will work with you to determine your particular circumstances and discuss any reasonable adjustment(s) that could be made to support you in your role. However, we acknowledge that often those with a disability don't need or want additional support or assistance. We will not make any assumptions, but will listen to you and agree what, if any, support is required.

Who will see the information you hold about me?

Only you and the HR team will be able to access your diversity information. Line managers will not have access. You complete and update the information confidentially on the HR system and it is protected by the General Data Protection Act 2018 . We actively encourage you to review and update this information at least annually to ensure any changes are made.

When employee information is reported and published, it is not possible to identify individuals. For example, a report will show the percentage/number of LGBTQ+ employees compared to the percentage of those who are heterosexual. However, no breakdown is provided where fewer than five employees are in a particular category.

We take confidentiality very seriously and you can be assured we will keep your information safe and secure.

⁴ to eliminate discrimination, victimisation, harassment and other prohibited conduct; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations across the nine protected characteristics.

Do I have to disclose my information?

No. It is absolutely up to you. However, we would urge you to seriously consider sharing it with us, as it will help us ensure we are not treating people unfairly.

There is some information we need you to provide e.g. date of birth (age) and marital/civil partnership status for payroll / pension purposes and nationality for establishing your right to work in the UK.

Who can I go to if I have a question?

You can discuss with your line manager in the first instance or contact a member of the HR team. Alternatively, the employee network groups or the Equality and Human Rights Steering Group (EHRSG), will be happy to answer any questions. A list of current members is on SharePoint (Equality and Human Rights – Steering Group). All discussions will be treated confidentially.