

SPSO equality and diversity policy

As a public-service provider, a statutory body and an employer, the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully committed to the fair and equal treatment of everyone we deal with.

Providing our service

We aim to meet the needs of people who use our service and stakeholders by:

- creating a work culture which values diversity, inclusiveness and respect, and empowers our employees to reflect those values in their dealings with the people who use our service and all other stakeholders;
- ensuring that we provide an accessible service to all users and potential users;
- providing clear, meaningful information about what we do and how we do it to complainants, the general public and other stakeholders, in ways that best suit their individual needs;
- identifying as early as possible any individual requirements that may need to be met in order for a service user to fully access our service; and
- being responsive to changing needs and requirements.

To put our commitment into action, we established an Equality Strategy Group in February 2009. This Group is charged with ensuring that our approach to diversity and equality remains up to date and relevant to the changing needs of our service users, the public and all other stakeholders.

Improving our accessibility - actions taken since February 2009

- Devising a Rapid Equality Impact Assessment for use before making any significant a change to a policy or procedure to ensure that we have taken needs of the users into account;
- Committing to ensuring equalities and diversity awareness is promoted to all staff to ensure unbiased consideration of complaints and that service users' accessibility needs are met;
- Taking advice from the Equality and Human Rights Commission in order to review and improve our Equal Opportunities Monitoring form;
- Reviewing our website for ease of reading and attaining the Crystal Mark stamp of approval for the website from the Plain English Campaign as an independent mark of achievement;
- Adding Browse-Along technology to our website to allow the site to 'talk' to service users and to highlight information on screen
- Gaining Crystal Mark on new leaflets that we issue, e.g. for our new area of responsibility, Scottish prisons;
- Producing audio leaflets of our five most requested leaflets and an 'easy read' leaflet to improve accessibility for a range of service users especially those with literacy or learning difficulties.

Our action plan for 2010-11 included a commitment to working with equalities bodies for mutual understanding and improved partnership working, including how we can reach under-represented and vulnerable groups.

Equal opportunities

We are committed to providing equal opportunities in employment. No job applicant or staff member will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, marital status, or racial grounds or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

We are totally opposed to discrimination. We are committed to conducting the business in a way that is fair to all sections of the community. This may mean taking positive steps to ensure equal opportunities for staff involved in staff selection, staff management and service delivery.

The diversity of our workforce

We publish information in our annual HR review that can be found in our publications list.

The diversity of our customers

We published information in our [2009-10 annual report](#) about the kinds of consumers who use our service. A summary of our equal opportunities monitoring feedback is on page 34 of the report.

Our [2009-10 annual report](#) included, for the first time, a chapter about the work we have done to ensure that we meet our equality and diversity duties. It contains examples of the way we are bringing awareness of different needs into our investigations work and into how and what we feed back to organisations. There are five case studies illustrating this work on pages 36-37. Recognising the importance of this area, we plan to include a chapter on equality and diversity in future annual reports.