

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Finance, Policy and Resources
DATE	26 September 2013
ACTING DIRECTOR	Paul Fleming
TITLE OF REPORT	Data Validation – Outcome of 2012/13 exercise
REPORT NUMBER:	CG/13/099

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide Committee with details of the outcome of the 2012/13 Data Validation exercise.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Committee is requested to:

- a) Note the outcome of the 2012/13 Data Validation exercise and instruct officers to further develop the reporting of diversity and equality information to fully meet Equality Act requirements.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications in respect of this report. The further development of the reporting of diversity and equality information will be undertaken internally by Council employees.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The main 'other' implication is the need to work towards full compliance with the 'specific duties' under the Equality Act in relation to the gathering and using employee information to better perform the 'general equality duty'.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

The latest data validation exercise was carried out from October 2012 to February 2013 and is undertaken every 3 years, with the previous exercise having been undertaken in 2009.

Its purpose is to confirm and gather both employee personal information held by the Council and 'sensitive personal' information, in

accordance with equality and data protection legislation. The personal information includes address, date of birth, marital status, next of kin and emergency contact details and the 'sensitive personal' information includes disability, ethnic origin, religion or beliefs and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act requires the Council to gather information on the composition of its employees and use the information to better perform the 'general equality duty'. To do this it is necessary to collect and analyse 'sensitive personal' information related to diversity and equality. The Data Protection Act 1998 requires that regular consent is obtained from employees to record, securely store and process their 'sensitive personal' details. As well as the above, employees were informed that the information would be used to promote diversity and equality in employment, improve policies and procedures, for equal pay purposes and in statistical returns and reports.

An electronic version of the data validation form was used by those employees with a Council e-mail account and access to the Zone. Those employees without the above were issued with a paper version of the form to complete, with a prepaid and addressed envelope provided for its return.

Appropriate communication was carried out in advance of the exercise to ensure that employees and managers were aware of how and when it would be undertaken and what was expected of them. A 'frequently asked questions' sheet was also prepared and made available with both the electronic and manual versions of the form.

Employees were strongly encouraged to participate in the exercise, to take the opportunity to update or provide their details to improve the quality and quantity of diversity and equality information held by the Council. The aim was to achieve as high a response rate as possible to help ensure that the information held by the Council was complete and accurate. The result was that 80% of employees returned the form which was considered to be a high response rate compared to the exercise carried out in 2009, which had a 63% response rate.

The information was then uploaded to the HR/Payroll database, with the sensitive personal information held in a secure area of the system only accessible by nominated officers in the Human Resources and Organisational Development service.

Following this a report was run from the system on the profile of the Council's workforce in terms of relevant protected characteristics (not identifying any individual employees).

The table below shows the key statistics from the report (run on 22 May 2013) compared to the figures the last time the report was run (on 30 November 2012), with an analysis following the table:

Category	22 May 2013	30 November 2012
Ethnic Minority Employees	1.75%	1.85%
No Declarations	31.78%	29.76%
Disabled Employees	2.72%	2.13%
No Declarations	24.26%	35.46%
Female Employees	70.36%	70.01%
Male Employees	29.64%	29.99%
Employee Age Range		
16 – 29	12.74%	13.35%
30 – 39	19.57%	19.39%
40 – 49	26.81%	27.05%
50 +	40.89%	40.21%
Employee Religion		
Buddhist	0.26%	0.19%
Other Christian	5.60%	4.44%
Church of Scotland	16.88%	0.50%
Christian (Protestant)	9.80%	22.99%
Christian (Roman Catholic)	4.98%	4.11%
Hindu	0.24%	0.18%
Humanist	0.48%	0.03%
Jewish	0.03%	0.05%
Muslim	0.38%	0.04%
None	30.03%	22.08%
No Declaration	24.30%	39.32%
Not Completed	1.46%	3.98%
Not Specified	0.03%	0.03%
Other	1.03%	1.56%
Pagan	0.41%	0.11%
Prefer Not To Answer	4.03%	0.00%
Sikh	0.06%	0.03%

The table shows that since the data validation exercise was undertaken:

- The percentage of ethnic minority employees in the Council has marginally reduced and the 'no declarations' have marginally increased.
- The percentage of disabled employees in the Council has marginally increased and the 'no declarations' have significantly decreased.

- The gender breakdown of employees has remained unchanged.
- The 16-29 age category has marginally reduced, the 30-39 category has remained the same, the 40-49 category has marginally reduced and the 50+ category has remained unchanged.
- The most significant changes in relation to religious breakdown were in relation to Church of Scotland which increased, Christian (Protestant) which decreased (but with both changes likely to be due to interpretation of the classifications), 'None' which increased and 'No declaration' which decreased.

The report therefore indicates a mixed picture in relation to the changes in the diversity and equality information held by the Council in relation to race, disability and religion. Although there was a high response rate by employees to the data validation exercise, it appears from the above that the percentage of employees choosing not to declare their ethnicity remains relatively high at 31.78%, but has reduced in relation to disability to 24.26% and in relation to religion to 28.33%, which is more positive. Employees have the right not to declare 'sensitive personal' information but by doing so it means that the diversity and equality information held by the Council is limited. This makes it more difficult to draw conclusions, identify any underrepresentation in the workforce on the basis of the protected characteristics and to then plan equality related interventions to address these. The Council will therefore continue to encourage employees to provide diversity and equality information the next time the data validation exercise is undertaken, which will be in 2015. The information in relation to gender and age has in the main remained unchanged, which is what would have been expected over such a short period of time.

One of the 'specific duties' under the Equality Act relating to public authorities is to take steps to gather and use employee information on the composition of employees as well as annual information on the recruitment, development and retention of employees with respect to the number and relevant protected characteristics of employees. The authority must then use this information to better perform the 'general equality duty'. The public sector equality duty covers the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnerships. At present the Council is working towards complying with this duty and the Human Resources and Organisational Development service will therefore proceed to take steps to further develop the reporting of diversity and equality information to fully meet the abovementioned 'specific duty'.

Also, one of the 'equality outcomes' reported in the Council's equality 'mainstreaming report' presented to the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee of 18 April 2013 was 'to have a workforce within the Council that reflects the community we serve'. What this means is that the makeup of the Council's workforce should mirror that of the relevant protected characteristic groups that live within Aberdeen City, with census information used as the comparator. The Council's annually produced Diversity and Equality Monitoring Report will help to demonstrate progress made in achieving this 'outcome' and is another reason for further developing the reporting of diversity and equality information, with action plans being put in place to meet the 'equality outcomes'.

6. IMPACT

The main impact of the data validation exercise is that it will assist the Council in working towards the 'specific duties' relating to public authorities under the Equality Act. It has been identified that there is a need to further develop the reporting of diversity and equality information to fully comply with these duties. The fact the Council achieved a high response rate to the data validation exercise is positive but there still remains a need, in future, to further encourage employees to declare diversity and equality information in order that any areas of underrepresentation in relation to protected characteristic groups are fully identified and understood, so that appropriate interventions can be considered.

An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment will be compiled in respect of the proposals in this report.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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