SPCB response to the findings of the 2005 Equal Opportunities Staff Audit

Introduction

The SPCB recognises that equal opportunities policies can only be effective if there are mechanisms in place to regularly review how well they are being implemented. With this in mind, the SPCB undertakes an Equal Opportunities Staff Audit every two years as a key part of meeting its legal obligations to monitor aspects of its employment practices.

The audit is an equalities issues related survey of our staff. The survey report of each audit is published along with a response from the SPCB which includes an action plan setting out how we will be progressing matters that have been raised in the report. The audit will enable us to monitor our progress in implementing policies, complying with equal opportunities legislation as an employer and to assist us in taking forward future policies.

This is the second such audit to be carried out and was undertaken in June 2005 with the report being produced by Challenge Consultancy Ltd.

Main Strengths

The audit report contains encouraging and positive information about our organisation. For example:-

- There was a high response rate from staff with just over 90% completing the audit questionnaire

- An overwhelming 90% of respondents said that they would recommend the SPCB as an employer

- There were 80.3% of staff who felt the Parliament was doing everything it reasonably can to implement its equal opportunity policies

- There is an equal balance of men and women working across all levels in the Parliament.

As an organisation we hope to build even further on this and recognise that the audit has been helpful in identifying where we can develop and respond effectively. The following information sets out our response and what actions will be taken to ensure that these matters are being properly addressed.
Audit Finding

There has been a decrease in the number of staff who felt they have experienced bullying and harassment.

Our response

The SPCB will take active steps to reduce this further. Although harassment and bullying incident figures are lower than reported in the 2003 audit, we will continue to look for ways to reduce further the number of incidences with the aim of eliminating harassment and bullying behaviour from the Parliament campus.

The SPCB has only ever received one formal complaint about bullying or harassment.

In order to ensure that we continue to reduce and indeed meet our aim of preventing any further harassment or bullying:

- All managers will be reminded of their responsibilities for ensuring that bullying and harassment is prevented. Where such behaviour occurs, they should be confident to deal with it, whether or not it is formally brought to their attention.

- We will consider producing a resource pack or fact sheets for managers providing practical guidance on addressing and challenging harassment and bullying in the workplace.

- We will review the number of cases which are received by Dignity at Work Contacts and the number of informal cases dealt with by Personnel to check for any areas of bullying and harassment.

- The Personnel Office and the Equalities Team will review the effectiveness of the Dignity at Work Policy and take appropriate action where necessary.

Audit Finding

The report highlights the need to further publicise the Dignity at Work Network. There was a small number of staff who said they had accessed the network.

Our response

It is difficult to assess why there are only a small number of references to the network. It could be interpreted that staff do not need to access the service and issues are being resolved elsewhere either by their line manager, the
Personnel Office or through personal action. However, it could be that staff need to be reminded of the service and what support is available to them.

We have already undertaken some additional publicity of the network of Dignity at Work Contacts by including information about the network in the SPCB staff induction equalities session.

In order to promote and develop the service:

- We will undertake additional publicity of the network to ensure all staff are aware of the network, its role and remit, and what support it can offer. The network contacts will be involved in the publicising of the service.

- The role of the Investigating Officer will also be reviewed and refresher training provided to all Contacts and Investigating Officers.

**Audit Finding**

**There has been an increase in the number of staff who feel they have not received sufficient training.**

**Our response**

The report illustrates that this finding bears no relation to anyone’s particular personal characteristics. However, it is important to investigate why some staff feel that the level of training they receive is inadequate. We must also take into consideration that agency workers were included in the audit but they do not have access to all of the training provided to SPCB staff. This may therefore distort the overall finding.

In response to this finding there are a range of actions we will take:

- Senior Management Team will encourage all office heads and line managers to be flexible in ensuring all staff are given the time and opportunity to attend training events.

- Personnel Office will consider how best to investigate whether those who have not received sufficient training has increased from the previous audit due to the move to Holyrood taking place during the 12 months prior to the audit being carried out, and whether this move meant staff had less opportunity to attend training events or not. The consideration of how best to take this forward will include whether line managers should be encouraged to ask staff during the end of year performance management process about the effect of the move to Holyrood or at a separate meeting(s) such as regular supervision or support meetings or to gather the information by some other means such as a focus group.
We will also compare these findings with the next audit finding to monitor whether the % of those who feel they have not received sufficient training has reduced.

Take up and attendance at training events across the organisation is currently being monitored by the Training & Development Team and the results are reported back to the Senior Management Team on a monthly basis. We will continue this practice to monitor training uptake.

Audit Finding

The age profile of staff has changed since the last audit in 2003. The audit found that there are no staff under the age of 20 currently in the organisation.

Our response

Although the report suggests that there has been a fall in the number of staff between the ages of 16-25, those who are aged 20-25 are well represented in the organisation, which is higher than the figures shown in the 2001 census data for the economically active population.

Naturally, since the last audit was held 2 years ago, staff in the organisation have aged which may account for the fall in the number of staff under the age of 20.

In order to ensure that we respond effectively to this finding:

- Personnel Office will check to see whether this is borne out by any other figures or information held within the organisation and report any findings to the Senior Management Team. However, it should be noted that we do not hold any information about Agency staff who were included in the staff audit so this will need to be factored into any findings.

- As part of our plan to implement the age discrimination legislation which comes into effect in October 2006, we will review our recruitment policies and procedures to ensure that we are not discriminating against younger applicants when advertising posts or considering qualification requirements for posts.

- Whilst all staff have the opportunity to take up exit interviews, we will over the coming year ensure that younger leavers are strongly encouraged to take up exit interviews to find out whether discrimination relating to their age has resulted in their decision to leave.
- We will investigate the modern apprentice programme and other similar programmes with the aim of recruiting more young people, particularly at school leaver age into the organisation.

**Audit Finding**

Since the last audit there has been a slight increase in the number of black and minority ethnic staff although they continue to be an under represented group within the organisation.

**Our response**

The SPCB will take further action to proactively target black and minority ethnic communities.

- We will continue to use and expand the number of black and minority ethnic organisations who receive all externally advertised job opportunities.

- The Personnel Office will attend 2 job fairs annually which are specifically targeted at black and minority ethnic communities and will consider running seminars/workshops about the Parliament’s recruitment process.

- Recruitment and Selection training will be provided to all appointing boards. Equalities issues have been integrated throughout the course.

- The ongoing work of both the Outreach Services Team and the Public Participation Development Officer is vital in encouraging greater engagement between the Parliament and members of the black and minority ethnic communities. Further engagement will be considered.

- As part of the recruitment and selection review, Personnel Office will check the application and success rates of all applicants by ethnic origin. This will help us to identify whether applications are being made by black and minority ethnic communities or whether there any issues with the process itself.