Employment support and advice-
We invite submissions, in writing, by Wednesday 1 July 2015
Please—

- **your response using the themes above** – if you wish to add any further issues, use additional headings at the end of your response
- **read the policy on treatment of written evidence by subject and mandatory committees** before sending your submission
- provide a maximum of 6 sides of A4
- **send submissions by email** to equal.opportunities@scottish.parliament.uk or **by post c/o the Clerk, Equal Opportunities Committee, TG.01, The Scottish Parliament, EDINBURGH, EH99 1SP**

**Background - Dumfries & Galloway Council**

The ethnic profile of Dumfries & Galloway Council’s workforce appears broadly reflective of its wider community where, according to the 2011 Scottish census, 98% of residents in Dumfries & Galloway were white. Black and other minority ethnic groups account for 1.2% of the population.

The Council is one of the largest employers in the area with over 7000 employees. In common with the vast majority of public sectors in Scotland, Black and other minority ethnic groups are underrepresented and as at 2014/15 account for 0.56% of our workforce in comparison to 90.46% disclosing to be white. 8.98% of employees chose not to disclose their race profile.

**Q.1 what provisions are in place to help people from ethnic minorities to access employment support and advice;**

Within Dumfries & Galloway Council, the Employability & Skills Service offers support to individuals of working age across the region to overcome barriers to employment, training or education and helps support progression into positive destinations. The service is available to all individuals resident in Dumfries & Galloway, willing and able to progress to working more than 16 hours per week and not participating in the Work Programme or the Work Choice Programme. Referrals to the service can be made by individuals or other agencies and our main referring agent is DWP. The Employability service is actively promoted across its partners and at practitioner and other group meetings.

All Dumfries & Galloway Council recruitment is done through myjobs.scotland.gov.uk however a targeted approach to advertising jobs is taken on occasion as a positive measure – examples include graduate internship and Modern Apprentice Scheme for young people.

**Q.2 what provisions are in place to recognise and address the lower employment rates among some ethnic minority groups compared to others;**

Dumfries & Galloway Council is an equal opportunities employer and fairness for everyone is our aim, specifically we will ensure equality of opportunity in all aspects of employment in terms of the protected characteristics. Dumfries & Galloway as a region has a low proportion of black and other minority ethnic group within its population. As an equal opportunities employer any request for assistance in terms of language interpretation or any other adjustment to enable positive recruitment would be considered and where possible accommodated.
Q.3 are there any innovative approaches being taken to address the challenges some people from ethnic minorities may experience in trying to access employment advice and support?

The Employability & Skills Service within Dumfries & Galloway Council have recently met with a representative of Dumfries & Galloway Multi Cultural Association (MCA) to provide an overview of the service, what the service can offer its members, how they can refer to the service, provided information on local work club provision and offered partnership support in the delivery of any employability related activity. Feedback received from the MCA will be considered and acted upon if it is considered to add value or close a gap in our service provision.

Recruitment, retention and promotion—

Q.4 what evidence is there that discrimination in recruitment, retention and promotion is an issue in Scottish workplaces;

There is no evidence to suggest that discrimination in recruitment, retention and promotion is an issue in Dumfries & Galloway Council. We strive to mainstream equalities in all that we do.

Q.5 what are the barriers that lead to unequal outcomes (including lower rates of employment and employment segregation)?

There is no specific evidence that signifies that this is an issue within Dumfries & Galloway.

Where employment segregation exists then there is a risk that it leads to stereotyping about men and women’s capabilities and skills impacting on the culture associated with different types of work and access to training/development opportunities.

In Dumfries & Galloway Council we offer mandatory training for all employees on Diversity.

Promoting positive action—

Q.6 what measures are being taken to tackle workplace discrimination and segregation;

The public sector Equality Duty is a statutory requirement and is positive in terms of reducing workplace discrimination and segregation.

As a result Dumfries & Galloway Council has in place Equality Outcomes which span across all areas of the Council and range through various themes as follows:-

- Transport,
- Regeneration & standard of living
- Community Safety
- Health, Social care and support
- Education
- Access and Communications
- Running our Business

Under the theme “Running our Business” our council is committed to:-

- Ensure opportunities are available for younger people
- Reduce the gender pay gap
- Reduce the levels of occupational segregation in employment
- Reasonable adjustments are made for employees more quickly
- Ensure that our staff and Members are diversity aware
- Ensure that our decisions take full account of equality considerations
Q.7 is there a need for a scheme that recognises positive action taken by employers (a “double tick” scheme for example);

We currently operate the two tick approach for disabled candidates. In addition we are an equal opportunities employer where we welcome applications from all areas of the community and more specifically the protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act. Where an applicant requests an adjustment (ranging from any of the protected characteristics, e.g. ground floor meeting room or language interpretation etc.) as a Council we ensure that requests are accommodated as far as is reasonably possible. Our employee composition broadly represents the community that we serve and do not have any information that suggests an additional double tick approach is necessary for race.

Q.8 what are the examples of good practice that have improved outcomes, and if so what has been the key to their success?

Dumfries & Galloway Council has embedded equality in all that it does. This has been successful due to the commitment and drive of our Senior Managers and Elected Members. Our Council Priorities encompasses equalities and directs us to be an inclusive council. We fulfil the terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty and seek to promote equality in all aspects of work of the Council.

Elkie H Astley,  29th June, 2015
HR Business Partner
Dumfries & Galloway Council