EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE
REMOVING BARRIERS: RACE, ETHNICITY AND EMPLOYMENT
SUBMISSION FROM NHS NATIONAL SERVICES SCOTLAND (NSS)

NHS National Services Scotland (also known as the Common Services Agency) (“NSS”) is pleased to be involved in responding to the inquiry into race ethnicity and employment being undertaken by the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Scottish Parliament. Noted below is each of the posed questions in turn together with NSS’s responses.

Question 1

Employment support and advice-

- what provisions are in place to help people from ethnic minorities to access employment support and advice;
- what provisions are in place to recognise and address the lower employment rates among some ethnic minority groups compared to others;
- 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?

Answer 1

In line with the public sector equality duty requirements under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, NSS published in April an updated mainstreaming report which contained proscribed employee data. On page 16 of this report, NSS outlined, as far as known, the current ethnic demographic of the workforce. From disclosed data, approximately 3% of the workforce have identified as being of a minority ethnic background (please note that this does not include the “white-other” category). This is considered a reasonable representation against the national backdrop which, in 2011, showed that only 4% of the population identified as belonging to a minority ethnic group¹. NSS works with the Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations (CEMVO) and other third sector organisations to develop our approach to our employment opportunities for ethnic minority groups. NSS is drafting an Inclusion Plan for recruitment. This Plan aims to have all protected characteristics treated with equal importance in the recruitment process. The Plan proposes to ensure equality responsibility rests with all employees by way of their job description and will implement positive action strategies. NSS has a modern apprentice scheme and is developing a youth employment strategy which will be applied equally across all the protected characteristics.

¹ http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities/DataGrid/Ethnicity/EthPopMig
Question 2

Recruitment, retention and promotion—

- what evidence is there that discrimination in recruitment, retention and promotion is an issue in Scottish workplaces;
- what are the barriers that lead to unequal outcomes (including lower rates of employment and employment segregation)?

Answer 2

Within NSS, current equal opportunity reporting focuses on the form completed by candidates for vacancies at the organisation. After joining the organisation, staff are not asked to update and change information and therefore there is limited robust evidence of advancement, secondment or changes in work based circumstance as a whole. Following the planned implementation of a new electronic employee reporting system shortly, this information will be captured and used to improve future recruitment activity.

The NHS Equality lead network has worked with NHS staff groups to gather evidence around what the issues are for ethnic minority staff in the NHS. In the wider NHS Scotland context, a short life working group was established prior to the first legislative deadline\(^2\) to produce a mainstreaming report with associated equality outcomes. This group had a remit of assisting Boards to develop a more robust evidence base to support the setting of outcomes and to support any common priorities identified. From the findings of that group\(^3\) which considered, *inter alia*, recruitment, the evidence showed that young people of all backgrounds in particular can face barriers to gaining employment. On a positive note, the importance of exemplary recruitment practice and accessible and targeted advertising together with sensitivity around location and timing of interviews to advance equality across all protected characteristics is promoted and encouraged.

From the same report, in relation to career progression, it was found that assumptions about inflexibility coupled with prejudicial attitudes based on ethnicity, gender and disability especially hindered career progression. The more detailed findings highlighted that evidence from Trade Unions, professional bodies and staff networks suggested that racial bias in recruitment remained an issue as was the process for the recognition of international qualifications resulting in employment at lower levels than are commensurate with the qualification. It was suggested that the emphasis on internal recruitment can be a barrier where there already exists a low percentage of ethnic minorities in employment. Recruiting staff were also found to

\(^{2}\) Pre April 2013

not be sufficiently aware of cultural issues. To obtain a copy of the report or discuss it further, please contact Kristi Long at NES: Kristi.long@nes.scot.nhs.uk.

On a wider note, in answer to this question, it is suggested that the Equality and Human Rights Commission may have evidence and case law to answer this question.

**Question 3**

Promoting positive action—

- what measures are being taken to tackle workplace discrimination and segregation;
- is there a need for a scheme that recognises positive action taken by employers (a “double tick” scheme for example);
- what are the examples of good practice that have improved outcomes, and if so what has been the key to their success?

**Answer 3**

NSS is active in its approach to eliminating discrimination, and where such discrimination is brought to the attention of management, appropriate process and procedures are invoked to ensure that the discrimination is stopped and a clear message is given that discrimination is not tolerated.

NSS staff are asked to complete an annual staff survey, the results of which are analysed and actioned to make NSS a great place to work. This survey has a section of questions relating to workplace discrimination. NSS is committed to positive action and is drafting an Inclusion Plan which has a section on recruitment which will detail targeted actions based on the gaps in the current workforce demographics. NSS is also focused on youth employment and through our youth employment strategy is seeking opportunities to increase the number of young people within the organisation. In terms of good practice, all staff are expected to complete an online module on equality and there are a series of annual roadshows run every year. The training programme for equality and diversity is being considered and will be improved over the next few years in order to be more cohesive with other training already delivered.

While a “double tick” scheme may promote positive action, there is a concern that there would be a level of bureaucracy and resource to implement. If kept simple, then it may be of value. For NSS, there will be a review of the Inclusion Plan once implemented to ensure it is advancing equality of opportunity for all.

NHS National Services Scotland
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