

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE
REMOVING BARRIERS: RACE, ETHNICITY AND EMPLOYMENT
SUBMISSION FROM WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

West Dunbartonshire Council welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Equal Opportunities Committee in relation to race, ethnicity and employment.

West Dunbartonshire has a population of 90,340. 1.5% of the population of West Dunbartonshire are from Black minority ethnic groups, this compares to 4% for the Scotland. An additional 0.4% of population are Polish.

The Council is the largest employer in the area with over 6000 employees. In common with the vast majority of the public sector in Scotland, Black and minority ethnic groups are underrepresented in our work force, with 0.31% of the workforce from Black and minority ethnic groups in 2014/2015.

Employment support and advice

Locally our Working4U service combines Employability, Community Learning and Development and Advice services support. This innovative approach provides a wrap-around employment support service for people at all stages of their employment journey. This is a relatively new service which is already delivering real results. As it further develops the overall accessibility and reach of the service will continue to increase

Our employability service monitoring shows that we are advising people from minority ethnic groups in proportion to area population. Positive destination outcomes, in terms of users going into education, training and qualifications, are similar. However, evidence suggests that Black service users are less likely to go on to employment than people from White groups.

To ensure a continued focus on employment support and advice West Dunbartonshire Council has set an equality outcome on increasing workforce diversity. In line with this, we are examining our equalities employment data, using the Local Government Benchmarking Framework, to identify best practice and improvement areas.

Over and above the standard employment support and advice on offer, our employment support services are specifically focused on raising awareness of the service and the Modern Apprenticeship programme with local Black and minority ethnic groups.

Recruitment, retention and promotion

In 2012 a UK Parliament All Party Group reported that black and minority ethnic people seeking employment sometimes changed the names on applications to avoid discrimination. However, recent [Coalition for Race Equality and Rights \(2014\)](#) research suggests no shortage of applicants from Black and minority ethnic groups for public sector jobs, with comparable proportions being invited for interview. In terms of job offers, however, the success rates are significantly lower for Black and minority ethnic groups.

Reports by the [Equality and Human Rights Commission \(2013\)](#) and the [Wood Commission \(2014\)](#), note the under representation of Black and minority ethnic people, disabled people and women in Modern Apprenticeships, and have called for action to increase diversity.

As a result of previous exclusion from many areas and types of work some Black and minority ethnic job seekers may not have direct experience of some roles, or the peer networks which support development.

'Experienced based' approaches to recruitment and selection in some fields rather than a 'competence based' approach may be impacting negatively on Black and minority ethnic people, as well as disabled people and women.

Promoting positive action

As mentioned West Dunbartonshire has adopted an equality outcomes focused on workplace diversity. In delivering this we have implemented core Equalities induction training for all staff start employment with the Council.

Underpinning our approach we have a clear Dignity at Work policy, and undertake detailed analysis of staff surveys to identify any patterns that might indicate discrimination, ensuring immediate action is taken.

Previous target setting has been successful in relation to gender diversity and gender balance in modern apprenticeships. Lessons from this approach are being examined and may be applied to race, ethnicity and employment.

Alongside this, work is planned through the West Dunbartonshire Equality Forum to explore a cross public sectoral approach on employment equalities. This will be supported by an analysis of pay gaps in terms of ethnicity and disability ahead of the legal requirement to publish data in 2017.

It is unlikely that positive action such as a double tick scheme would increase the number of Black or other minority applying or invited for interview in the public sector. As noted above there is evidence to suggest that a bigger issue is a lower success rates at interview for Black versus White groups. However, such a scheme may be more effective in other sectors, if the proportion of black and minority ethnic people being interviewed is an issue.

Inequality in employment is a persistent issue with limited examples of proven significant change. Past positive action measures applied in Scotland have been small in scale with no follow up evidence of sustainability or long term impact.

However, the Scottish Public Sector Equality Duty has given impetus, a legislative framework and a practical time frame to build on. This may be the set of conditions which deliver that long term sustainability and positive impact not seen to date.

The current work on the Local Government Benchmarking Framework Equalities indicators is a further opportunity to identify good practice and should be explored further.

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