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# **Evaluation of the Improving Equality Outcomes Project Equality and Human Rights Commission Scotland**

**Final Report  
February 2015**

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

1. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) commissioned an evaluation of their Improving Equality Outcomes Project – a programme of direct support to 46 public authorities whose equality outcomes were judged to be likely to benefit from some support from the EHRC to improve them.
2. Our evaluation focused on assessing the overall effectiveness of the support programme from the perspective of participants. This report presents the views and experiences of a range of authorities that participated in the programme. It also sets out the findings and conclusions from our evaluation, along with the key learning points that have emerged from this.
3. The evaluation involved three main stages:
  - a desktop review of existing information;
  - an online survey of participating authorities – we received 27 survey responses (59% of participating authorities); and
  - telephone interviews with 14 participating authorities.

### **Experience of support**

4. The opportunity to get individual structured feedback from EHRC was seen to be the most helpful form of support, particularly for smaller authorities – with 80% of those responding to the survey saying that this was ‘helpful’ or ‘very helpful’. Many said that they welcomed the tailored feedback that they received from EHRC, whether this was face-to-face, by phone or email and that this had helped to inform their revised equality outcomes.
5. However, a number of authorities said that this type of feedback should have been provided at a much earlier stage – much closer to the time of publication of the equality outcomes in April 2013.
6. Well over half of respondents said that the self assessment tool had been ‘helpful’ or ‘very helpful’ and had provided a good step-by-step guide, as well as useful examples of good practice. A small minority said that the self assessment tool was complex and difficult to use.
7. Authorities were more ambivalent about the usefulness of the introductory seminar. Many felt that it was not relevant to them or that it was too general and did not provide specific feedback on individual outcomes and how to improve them. Others questioned the rationale for bringing lots of different organisations together at one event, suggesting that a more targeted and tailored approach should have been taken, bringing together smaller groups of similar types of authorities.

8. Many authorities were very positive about the support that they had received from EHRC staff, saying that this had been ‘constructive’ and ‘helpful’. Feedback was generally felt to have been handled well and had struck the right balance.

### **Impact of support**

9. The support seems to have had limited additional impact on either ‘changing attitudes’ or ‘strategic involvement’ within organisations, with many authorities stating that they already had ‘buy-in’ at senior management and board level.
10. In terms of ‘engagement’ and ‘joint working’, the overall impact of the support seemed to have been modest, with many authorities saying that they already had appropriate processes in place.
11. In contrast, it was clear that the support had a positive impact in helping authorities to develop and improve their evidence bases. However, for many authorities, this was still ‘work in progress’ and more work was required to fill the gaps in evidence, particularly at the local level. This was particularly true of smaller authorities.

### **Equality outcomes**

12. Almost half the authorities said that the support they had received from EHRC had helped ‘a lot’ with the rewording of their equality outcomes, and that getting access to good practice examples had improved their understanding of what was required.
13. A number of authorities said that there was now a greater focus on outcomes rather than outputs. Others said that they were now clearer on how they would measure progress against their outcomes – although some said that they still had more to do on this.

### **Growing confidence**

14. The people participating in the project self-assessed their confidence in relation to eight elements of developing equality outcomes before and after their involvement in the project. They scored each element out of 10 – with the higher scores equating to greater confidence. There was a substantial increase in confidence – from an average of 5.3 (out of 10) before to 7.8 after the project.

### **Lessons learned**

15. The timing of feedback was seen to be critical for most authorities. This had been affected on this occasion by the requirement for Scottish Ministers to publish their report on the duties. Following future deadlines, EHRC should seek to provide feedback to all authorities as early as possible, whether this is face-to-face, by phone or by email.

16. It was clear from our evaluation that 'one to one' support was the most effective form of support, although it was recognised that in practical terms it might be difficult to provide this type of support on a regular basis to all public authorities.
17. EHRC could consider more proportionate and targeted ways of dealing with, and supporting different types and sizes of organisations, particularly smaller organisations.
18. There appears to be a perceived disconnect for authorities that are remote from the central belt. EHRC could consider methods of improving connections with these organisations to ensure that they have greater access to a range of good practice.
19. Performance measurement is a challenge, particularly for smaller organisations. This might be an area where tailored training, support and guidance would be beneficial in future.

# 1 | Introduction

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## About this report

- 1.1 In October 2014, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) commissioned an evaluation of its Improving Equality Outcomes Project – a programme of direct support to 46 public authorities whose equality outcomes were judged to be likely to benefit from some support from the EHRC to improve them.
- 1.2 Our evaluation focused on assessing the overall effectiveness of the support programme from the perspective of participants. This report presents the views and experiences of a range of supported authorities that participated in the programme. It also sets out the findings and conclusions from our evaluation, along with key learning points that have emerged from this. It should be noted that this evaluation did not review the amended outcomes to assess the changes brought about by this work, as EHRC carried out a full assessment of the revised outcomes.

## Method

- 1.3 The evaluation involved three main stages:
  - **Desktop review of existing information** – EHRC held a range of information about the 46 supported authorities that participated in the support programme. This included self-assessment forms which participating public authorities were asked to complete before and after receiving support and which indicated their confidence in relation to a number of indicators.
  - **Online survey of supported authorities** – We ran an online survey of supported authorities. The survey was distributed to all of the 46 supported authorities. Survey responses were received from 27 authorities (59% of participating authorities).
  - **Telephone interviews with supported authorities** – As follow-up to the online survey, we held interviews with 14 supported authorities selected from the survey to explore their experiences in more detail. This included a mix of authorities of different types and sizes from across Scotland, with varied experience and use of the support, and also with different challenges.
- 1.4 It is important to note that we agreed with participants that we would not attribute any comments to them or their authorities. We therefore have not identified the authorities (or individuals) involved in this research.
- 1.5 In addition, the evaluation is qualitative. While it provides rich information about people's views, attitudes and behaviours, these views are subjective and based on their own experiences and interpretation of events. The report does include unattributed verbatim quotes, to demonstrate key points. These have been carefully selected to demonstrate and provide a flavour of views – but they are not intended to summarise all views.

- 1.6 Of the 46 participating authorities, 36 provided equality outcomes which EHRC believe will improve these authorities' ability to measure the changes that they bring about for protected groups. In a small number of cases, the focus of improvement was on new supporting evidence, such as management frameworks or measurement criteria frameworks, rather than the outcomes themselves.

## 2 | Context

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### Introduction

2.1 This chapter briefly summarises the context in which this research was undertaken setting out the general and specific duties which public authorities in Scotland are required to meet in terms of equality and employment, and also progress that has been made since public authorities in Scotland published their first mainstreaming reports and equality outcomes in April 2013.

### The Equality Act 2010

2.2 The majority of the Equality Act 2010 came into force on 1 October 2010. Under the Act, current law in relation to equality has been harmonised, simplified and strengthened. It aims to protect people from discriminatory treatment and promote a fair and more equal society.

2.3 The Equality Act 2010 sets out a Public Sector Equality Duty (the equality duty). It came into force on 5 April 2011. Under this duty, a public body must give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

2.4 The eight protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

2.5 The Act covers the whole of Great Britain. However, there are also specific duties that are designed to help bodies meet the general duties. Scottish Ministers have set specific duties for Scottish listed authorities whilst those in England and in Wales are different. These are discussed below.

### The Scottish Specific Duties

2.6 The Specific Duties in Scotland were passed in March 2012, through the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 and came into force on 27 May 2012.

- 2.7 The Regulations list all public authorities that are subject to the specific duties (referred to as ‘listed authorities’). As at 1 April 2014 there were 239 public authorities listed as being covered by the specific duties under the public sector equality duty.
- 2.8 In summary, the specific duties require listed authorities to:
- produce a report on their efforts to meet the equality duty;
  - publish a set of equality outcomes, and record their progress in meeting these outcomes;
  - review and assess any new policies or practices to ensure they meet the equality duty and make arrangements to review existing policies;
  - gather and use work force related information to advance equality;
  - where a listed authority has 150 or more employees, publish information on pay gaps between men and women;
  - where a listed authority has 150 or more employees, publish a statement covering their equal pay policy and specific information on occupational segregation;
  - consider equality in their procurement practices; and
  - publish the above information in a way that makes it accessible to all members of the public.

### **Improving Equality Outcomes Project**

- 2.9 Listed authorities were required to publish their first mainstreaming reports and equality outcomes by 30 April 2013. In 2013/14 the EHRC carried out a project called Measuring Up?<sup>1</sup> to monitor how well public authorities in Scotland had met the Public Sector Equality Duty specific duties. This project covered 259 public authorities.
- 2.10 The EHRC found that many public authorities had failed to measure up fully to the detail of the specific duty requirements. Only 1 in 3 had published robust equality outcomes that were clear and measurable. Many had produced equality outcomes that made it difficult for them to report effectively on their progress by April 2015, as required.
- 2.11 In December 2013, as part of their own specific duty, Scottish Ministers published their proposals<sup>2</sup> to enable public authorities to better perform their Public Sector Equality Duties. These proposals had been informed by the experiences of the public authorities in responding to the specific duties at that time.

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<sup>1</sup> EHRC - Measuring Up? Report 3: Monitoring Public Authorities Performance of the Scottish Specific Duties – September 2013  
[http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/documents/Scotland/PSED\\_in\\_Scotland/measuring\\_up\\_3\\_final.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/documents/Scotland/PSED_in_Scotland/measuring_up_3_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Government – Scottish Ministers’ proposals to enable the better performance of the Public Sector Equality Duty 2013-2017 – December 2013 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0044/00440910.pdf>

2.12 In response to the Measuring Up exercise, and taking account of Scottish Ministers' proposals for improving performance against the equality duties, the EHRC committed to work in partnership with Scottish Government to support improving the performance of public authorities in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty. In June 2014, the EHRC launched a programme of direct support for 46 authorities whose equality outcomes were judged as most likely to benefit from improvement. The programme involved a combination of seminars, peer support, dedicated support from EHRC staff and a self-assessment tool. Following participation in this programme, the participating authorities agreed to produce renewed equality outcomes in October 2014.

## 3 | Key Findings

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### Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter sets out the key findings gathered from the views expressed by the authorities that participated in the EHRC's Improving Equality Outcomes Project. These views were gathered through a combination of an online survey, and follow-up telephone interviews with selected authorities.

### Experience of support

- 3.2 Participating authorities were asked about the different types of support that they had received from EHRC as part of the support programme.

#### **Structured support**

- 3.3 Over four fifths of authorities said that the individual structured feedback that they had received from EHRC had been either 'helpful' or 'very helpful'. Many [14] authorities said that they welcomed the opportunity of getting tailored feedback from EHRC, whether this was face-to-face, by phone or email. They felt that this had helped to inform their revised equality outcomes. Some said that this approach had allowed them to discuss issues that were specific to their authorities. However, a number of authorities said that they would have welcomed this type of feedback at a much earlier stage – much closer to the time of publication of the equality outcomes in April 2013. As a result steps had been taken by some authorities to develop action plans and performance management systems based on outcomes that subsequently required to be amended.

"The one to one feedback was the only place where we learnt what the specific issues relating to our outcomes were."

(Participating authority)

"We had a very good positive discussion about our specific documents. Given the circumstances, [EHRC staff] have done exceptionally well. They played a blinder."

(Participating authority)

#### **Self assessment tool**

- 3.4 Well over half of respondents said that the self assessment tool had been either 'helpful' or 'very helpful'. One authority commented that it had provided a good 'step-by-step' guide, as well as useful examples of good practice.
- 3.5 In contrast, a small minority of authorities [2] said that the self assessment tool had not been helpful. The main criticism made by these authorities was that it was complex and difficult to use. One authority said that it had limited value to them, as they had only been required to make minimal changes to their outcomes. A number of authorities said that they hadn't used it at all.

“The Self Assessment Tool was difficult to use: what was it getting at, what information was it wanting from us?”

(Participating authority)

### **Briefing pack**

- 3.6 Two thirds of authorities said that the briefing pack information had been either ‘helpful’ or ‘very helpful’, but did not make any further comments in relation to the pack.

### **Introductory seminar**

- 3.7 Over two fifths of authorities said that the introductory seminar had been either ‘helpful’ or ‘very helpful’. One authority commented that it had provided an opportunity to network with colleagues from other authorities and to discuss common issues about the equality outcomes.

- 3.8 However, just over a quarter of authorities felt that the introductory seminar was ‘not helpful’. Many of these authorities felt that the seminar was either not relevant to them, or that it was too general and did not provide specific feedback on individual outcomes and how to improve them.

“This got people off on the wrong foot, as they were not sure what they should be aiming for.”

(Participating authority)

- 3.9 There was strong agreement across authorities that it would have been more beneficial if feedback had been provided to individual authorities in advance of the introductory seminar. One respondent commented that the gap between submitting their original outcomes to EHRC and getting any kind of advice or feedback from EHRC had been too long – with feedback only being provided 14 months after publication of the equality outcomes. In addition, others questioned the rationale of bringing lots of very different authorities together, suggesting that it would have been better and more meaningful if smaller workshops or discussion groups had been organised for similar types of authorities.

“We spent a day wondering what we had done wrong. It would have been more helpful to have focused on what needed to change.”

(Participating authority)

“The analysis of the original outcomes should have been made available to us before the seminar for it to have any real purpose.”

(Participating authority)

- 3.10 One respondent based in a remote location in Scotland highlighted the problem of accessibility, stating that it was not possible to attend the seminar in Glasgow due to time and cost constraints, and that a video conference facility should have been available for authorities that were not based in the central belt.

- 3.11 A small number of authorities added that there were not enough examples of good practice given at the seminar that were relevant to smaller, more specialist authorities, for example, licensing boards or regional transport partnerships.
- 3.12 Others commented that the timing of the event was not good, with some of the joint valuation board's commenting that they were tied up with updating their electoral registers before the Independence Referendum.

### ***What worked best***

- 3.13 Participating authorities were asked in the telephone interviews about the one thing about the project that had made the greatest positive impact. Their responses are summarised below:
- The opportunity to get tailored 'one to one' feedback from EHRC [4].
  - It helped to increase awareness of the both the equalities duties and equality outcomes [2].
  - The feedback from EHRC was handled well – their approach was about 'assisting' not 'punishing' [2].
  - The chance to reflect and review where they were compared to other authorities [2].
  - Getting access to examples of good practice [2].

"This was a new process for some of us, who were not used to setting outcomes. We thought that we had met the requirements until we saw some of the examples of good practice."

(Participating authority)

### ***What didn't work***

- 3.14 Participating authorities were also asked during the telephone interviews about the one thing that EHRC could have done differently to achieve greater impact from the project. Their responses are summarised below:
- Guidance and support should have been available at the first iteration of the process, preferably in advance of the original April 2013 deadline.
  - EHRC should have been more proactive - the support process should have started earlier – June 2014 was already too late.
  - EHRC should have taken a more targeted and proportionate approach to providing support, particularly for smaller authorities such as regional transport authorities and licensing boards.
  - It would have been better to have had separate seminars/ workshops for similar types of authorities.
  - There should have been more examples of good practice relevant to smaller authorities.
  - Better use should have been made of existing groups and networks for the provision of advice and support.
  - EHRC should issue templates for authorities to use – to get more consistency in approaches.
  - Access to video conferencing facilities for authorities that are geographically remote from the central belt.

- More flexibility in annual cycle for outcomes – the April to March cycle does not work for all authorities.
- More frequent dialogue between EHRC and public authorities.

“As a joint licensing board, we are quite different from other public bodies – we don’t employ staff and we don’t provide services.”

(Participating authority)

“As a result of being part of the project, we feel that we have had to go beyond what was required of similar organisations.”

(Participating authority)

“People were keen to address issues that EHRC had identified in the June Seminar, but things seemed to drag out a bit, as EHRC resources were under pressure.”

(Participating authority)

### **General comments**

- 3.15 A few authorities expressed their views on the Improving Equality Outcomes Project as a whole. These views were split, with some welcoming the project and the different types of support provided by the EHRC. One authority commented that they had provided additional supporting information to EHRC (a performance framework which they had not previously published) and were not required to amend their original equality outcomes. Nevertheless, they had found it worthwhile participating in the project, even although it was just for a short while, as it had helped to boost confidence levels.

“The whole process was helpful in guiding us to review our outcomes.”

(Participating authority)

“The feedback from EHRC was positive, and I was able to report this back to the council and this helped to address some internal concerns about being ‘called-in’ by the EHRC in the first place.”

(Participating authority)

- 3.16 However, others felt that the process was ‘frustrating’ and ‘drawn out’ and could have been much simpler, and carried out at an earlier stage.

“There was little that was positive – it was a frustrating process.”

(Participating authority)

“Individual support, a couple of individual conversations and a general email could have replaced the entire process.”

(Participating authority)

“The project was implemented too late, when most organisations had spent over a year progressing action plans to meet their outcomes.”

(Participating authority)

- 3.17 Many authorities spoke highly of the support that they had received from staff within EHRC stating that it had been ‘constructive’ and ‘helpful’. Some said that they really liked EHRC’s approach, as it struck the right balance between providing advice and support, and letting people get on with the job.
- 3.18 However, one authority commented that the feedback they had been given was ‘unhelpful’, and had covered things that were already included within their mainstreaming report. Their feeling was that the focus of the exercise was on achieving compliance, and ticking the right boxes, rather than seeking to make a real difference.

### **Impact of support**

- 3.19 Supported authorities were asked what impact the support they had received had had on their authorities.

### ***Changing attitudes***

- 3.20 Just under a fifth of authorities said that the support had had ‘a lot’ of impact in helping to change attitudes within their authorities. But just over half said that it had ‘a little’ impact. Some [3] said that as a result of their participation in the project and the involvement of EHRC, this had ensured that greater priority was given to the revised outcomes.

“Being part of the project provided an opportunity to publicise what they were doing to support the equalities agenda and how this impacted on different PC groups.”

(Participating authority)

### ***Strategic involvement***

- 3.21 A fifth of authorities said that the support had had ‘a lot’ of impact on strategic involvement within their authorities, with two fifths saying it had had ‘a little’ impact. Many authorities said that there was already buy-in at senior management and board level, and this had not really changed as a result of support from EHRC. Whilst some said that it had helped to raise awareness within their authorities, others said that it had allowed a more strategic overview to be taken that ensured buy-in to the equalities agenda.

“It has prompted an awareness at Director and Board level of the need to review and have in place appropriate equality outcomes.”

(Participating authority)

### ***Engagement***

- 3.22 A quarter of authorities said that the support had ‘a lot’ of impact on engagement with key stakeholders. Whereas half of authorities said it had had ‘a little’ impact. Many said that they were already committed to engaging with key stakeholders internally and externally, and that these arrangements had been in place when they produced their first set out outcomes. A small number [2] said that they had sought to involve a wider range of stakeholders or link in with existing networks, following the support and feedback they had received from EHRC.

- 3.23 Others said that they would ensure that all stakeholders, including staff, were covered in future consultation and engagement processes.

“This was the real positive from the second iteration.”

(Participating authority)

- 3.24 Well over a quarter of authorities said that the support had had ‘a lot’ of impact on joint working. The same number said that it had had ‘a little’ impact. Many said that their joint working processes and structures were already in place and well established, and that this had not really been affected by the support from EHRC. One authority commented that the EHRC support had helped to fine tune existing arrangements.

### **Better evidence**

- 3.25 A number of authorities [5] said that they had tried to develop their evidence base, but for some this was a challenge, partly due to resources and also the availability of robust data at a local level. A few said that this was still ‘work in progress’ and more work was required to fill some of the gaps, and to develop a more comprehensive evidence base.

“We tried to pull in evidence to support the development of our outcomes, but local evidence is hard to come by.”

(Participating authority)

- 3.26 Other authorities [5] said that they had made better use of their existing evidence, by making relevant links to their equality outcomes. Although some noted that more work would be required to develop this further.

“We are now able to present a clearer picture of where we were, where we are now and where we are heading.”

(Participating authority)

“We did a more thorough job with what we had.”

(Participating authority)

### **Confidence levels**

- 3.27 In the survey, over three quarters of authorities said that the support they had received from EHRC had helped to boost their confidence. Some of these authorities said that it had reassured them that what they were doing was right, and that they were now clearer on how to develop focused and measurable outcomes. Others said that they had a better understanding of EHRC’s requirements and of their duties more generally.

“The feedback and assistance from EHRC has proved useful in terms of developing a more appropriate structure and content of our Outcomes document.”

(Participating authority)

“It helps us know that what we are producing meets best practice and legislative aims.”

(Participating authority)

3.28 However, a small minority of authorities [3] did not feel that the support had boosted their confidence. One authority said that the way that the support had been delivered had actually undermined their confidence.

“We are still confused.”

(Participating authority)

3.29 In addition, the EHRC asked participants to complete a simple ‘score card’ to indicate on a scale of 1 to 10 how confident they felt about a series of eight statements. At the start of the project, 37 participating individuals completed a confidence scorecard. At the end of the project, 12 participants completed the scorecard. We have analysed the changes in average confidence before and after involvement in the project. Table 3.1 clearly shows that there has been a significant increase in the average level of confidence.

<b>Table 3.1: Change in participants’ confidence before and after involvement in the project</b>		
Confidence measure	Average score before	Average score after
I know where to find online guidance to help me prepare our equality outcomes.	5.6	9.1
All our equality outcomes are SMART.	4.2	6.9
I know what steps I will take to involve people who share relevant protected characteristics or represent the interests of persons with protected characteristics.	5.4	7.6
I have developed a relevant equality evidence base which clearly links to our equality outcomes.	4.4	7.4
I can show how each of our equality outcomes are linked to one or more of the three needs of the general equality duty.	5.5	7.9
I can demonstrate our outcomes address the needs of all relevant protected characteristics or provide an explanation for any which are not covered.	4.9	7.8
I have an action plan to support delivery of outcomes.	5.8	7.7
I will be able to report on progress to achieve our equality outcomes by 30 April 2015.	6.5	8.3
<b>Overall average confidence level</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>7.8</b>

3.30 Across all confidence indicators, the average confidence has grown from 5.3 to 7.8. In addition, there was a significantly greater average confidence level for each of the eight individual confidence indicators. The lowest average score before was 4.2, while the lowest confidence score after was 6.9. This feedback from participants suggests that the project had a strong impact on the levels of confidence of participants.

## Equality outcomes

3.31 Participating authorities were also asked in the telephone interviews about the impact of the support on their outcomes, and also their processes for developing outcomes.

### **Impact on wording**

3.32 Just under half of the authorities said that the support that they had received from EHRC had helped 'a lot' with the rewording of their outcomes. Some saying that their outcomes had changed significantly [3] and others [4] said that it had led to minor adjustments.

"I had to go back to the drawing board and review our approach."

(Participating authority)

"The outcomes are clearer and better, and we are clearer on where we go next."

(Participating authority)

"We feel the revised outcomes better reflect the work we are doing thanks to the guidance we received."

(Participating authority)

3.33 In the main, authorities commented positively on the support from EHRC saying that it had been 'constructive', 'helpful' and 'plain spoken'. A few said that getting access to examples of good practice had helped them to understand what was required. However, one authority made the point that the examples provided by EHRC were not always relevant to smaller authorities.

3.34 In addition, authorities [4] said that the support from the EHRC had helped to:

- increase their awareness of equalities and the equalities duties more generally;
- ensure that their outcomes were better aligned to their overall strategy; or
- boost their confidence.

3.35 A few respondents [2] who provided services to their local licensing boards said that it had prompted them to seek expert input and support from their own council's Equalities Officer.

"I wish I had done this at the outset, rather than going it alone."

(Participating authority)

3.36 In contrast, a small number of authorities [3] said that there had been no real change. In particular, two education authorities said that in the end, they did not change their outcomes, but instead had provided additional supporting information to EHRC that linked their equality outcomes to previously unpublished performance management frameworks.

- 3.37 One authority felt quite strongly that as a result of the feedback that they had received from EHRC, their revised outcomes were now ‘too general’ and ‘worse’ than their original ones.

### ***Other key differences***

- 3.38 A number of authorities [8] said that there was now a greater focus on outcomes, rather than outputs. Three authorities said that they had fewer outcomes than before and three said that they had more. A relatively small number of authorities [5] said that their outcomes covered a larger number of protected groups. Importantly, many authorities [9] said that they were clearer on how they will measure progress against outcomes. Although some of these commented that this was still ‘work in progress’ and that developing a robust evidence base was a challenge that required more support.

“I believe our revised outcomes are much more evidence based and I am hopeful that they can be improved further as we get smarter with involving groups as part of the development of outcomes at an earlier stage.”

(Participating authority)

“We are in a better place and should be more able to measure progress.”

(Participating authority)

### ***Impact on processes***

- 3.39 There was agreement across all authorities that the support from EHRC had helped to improve their processes for developing equality outcomes. With more than half of authorities saying that it had helped ‘a lot’.
- 3.40 Some authorities said that as a result of the feedback and engagement with EHRC, they were now clearer on what was expected of them, and this had helped to point them in the right direction. One authority believed that EHRC’s own views of outcomes had evolved since the initial outcomes were developed in 2013. One authority said that EHRC’s involvement had helped to ‘add weight’ to the changes that were required within their authority.
- 3.41 However, a few authorities commented that it would have been more beneficial to have had the advice at an earlier stage, and that guidance should have been more tailored to suit the needs of different types of authorities, for example, authorities that do not deliver services or deal with the public.
- 3.42 A small number also felt that the process of providing support took too long and was needlessly drawn out, suggesting that it would have been better if EHRC had made direct contact with authorities at the outset, providing individual feedback and tailored support as required.

## Future support

3.43 Participating authorities were asked in the telephone interviews about other types of support that might help them develop their equality outcomes in future. A number of suggestions were made including:

- Access to more regular, timely and tailored feedback, 'one to one' support and advice, and having a named EHRC contact.
- Setting up a general helpdesk service to provide informal advice and support, backed up with more targeted support for smaller authorities with limited access to 'in-house' equalities expertise.
- Adopting a more proportionate approach to dealing with different types and sizes of public bodies, particularly smaller authorities.
- Providing access to more examples of relevant good practice.
- Developing more detailed guidance on for example, performance monitoring and reporting; how to engage with equality groups.
- Using standard templates for equality outcomes and equality performance measures, to ensure greater consistency, transparency and compliance.
- Greater consistency and transparency in the appraisal of equality outcomes.
- More opportunities for workshops and networking opportunities (face to face and virtual) to share experiences and disseminate good practice and lessons learned – make more use of existing networks such as SOLACE, Justice Equality and Diversity Network, or the NDPB Equalities Forum.
- More focus on raising awareness and securing 'buy-in' at senior management level.

## Other comments

3.44 A small number of authorities made additional comments and suggestions about the Improving Equality Outcomes Project in the telephone interviews:

- One authority felt that the EHRC did not fully understand the role of some authorities, for example, licensing boards.
- One authority felt that the EHRC should have a higher profile in the north of Scotland.
- A small number of authorities [2] found it difficult in practice to get the necessary internal approvals in advance of the deadline for submitting their revised outcomes.

## 4 | Conclusions

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### Introduction

4.1 This chapter sets out the main conclusions from our evaluation.

### Experience of support

- It was clear from the feedback that access to individual, structured feedback was seen to be the most helpful form of support provided by EHRC as part of the project. This was welcomed by a substantial majority of authorities, particularly the smaller ones, as it helped to clarify what was required to improve and develop revised equality outcomes.
- The timing of feedback and support was seen to be critical – many commented that this should have happened at a much earlier stage, which would have enabled authorities to make the necessary improvements more quickly.
- Access to good practice examples in the self assessment tool had also helped many authorities, although some of the smaller authorities suggested there should be a broader range of examples of good practice that were relevant to different types and sizes of authorities.
- There was a feeling that EHRC should have adopted a more proportionate and tailored approach towards some of the smaller authorities, for example, licensing boards and regional transport partnerships, as these authorities had limited resources and often did not have direct access to equalities expertise.
- Overall, the vast majority of authorities were very positive about the ‘constructive’ and ‘helpful’ support that they had received from EHRC.

### Impact of support

- The support seemed to have had limited impact in terms of ‘changing attitudes’ or increasing ‘strategic involvement’. With many authorities stating that the equalities agenda was already a priority for them, and that they already had senior management and board level ‘buy-in’ to this.
- Similarly, in terms of ‘engagement’ and ‘joint working’, the overall impact of the support seemed to have been relatively modest, with many authorities saying that they already had appropriate processes in place.

- It was clear that the support had had a positive impact in helping authorities to develop and improve their evidence bases. However, for many, particularly the smaller authorities, this was still 'work in progress' - and more work was required to fill the gaps in evidence, particularly at the local level.

### **Equality outcomes**

- A significant number of authorities said that the support from EHRC had helped to improve their equality outcomes and that their revised outcomes were now clearer and more meaningful.
- For others, the focus was on linking their outcomes to performance management frameworks and a number of authorities said that they were now clearer on how they would measure progress against outcomes.

### **Future support**

4.2 A number of suggestions were made in relation to future support.

#### ***Tailored support and advice***

4.3 There was an appetite for continued tailored support, particularly for smaller authorities with limited equalities expertise. In addition, it was suggested that EHRC set up a general helpdesk service to provide more general support and advice for all public authorities.

#### ***Guidance and good practice***

4.4 A number of authorities said that EHRC should provide more detailed guidance on key issues for example, performance monitoring or engaging with different protected characteristic groups. In addition, it was suggested that EHRC should be more proactive at promoting good practice that is relevant to all types of public authorities.

#### ***Standard templates***

4.5 There was a call for EHRC to produce standard templates that could be used for the development of equality outcomes and performance measures, as a way of ensuring greater consistency in approaches across all public authorities.

#### ***Greater consistency***

4.6 A number of the smaller authorities suggested that the process for appraising outcomes could be more consistent and transparent. Some said that after discussion of equality outcomes with their peers, it was not always clear why some authorities with similar outcomes had 'passed', and others had 'failed'.

#### ***More proportionate approach***

4.7 Some of the smaller authorities also felt that the EHRC should take a more proportionate approach when dealing with them.

***Better networking***

- 4.8 There was general agreement that there should be more networking opportunities - where possible tapping into existing groups and forums - as a way of sharing experiences and promoting good practice and lessons learned.

## 5 | Lessons Learned

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### Introduction

5.1 This chapter sets out the key lessons and learning points that have emerged from our evaluation.

### Lessons learned

- The timing of feedback was seen to be critical for most authorities. This had been affected on this occasion by the requirement for Scottish Ministers to publish their report on the duties. Following future deadlines, EHRC should seek to provide feedback to all authorities as early as possible, whether this is face-to-face, by phone or by email. This would then allow authorities to action any changes as quickly as possible. Having a named contact within EHRC would also be helpful, so that authorities know who they can speak to whether formally, or informally.
- It was clear from our evaluation that ‘one-to-one’ support was the most effective form of support. It was appreciated that there are resource implications in providing this type of support on a regular basis for all public authorities. Perhaps there might be scope to look at providing a mix of support options in the future. For example, more targeted and tailored support for smaller organisations, backed up with more general support for other authorities, perhaps through existing networks.
- EHRC could consider more proportionate and targeted ways of dealing with, and supporting different types and sizes of organisations, particularly smaller organisations. This could be backed up with a more co-ordinated approach to promoting good practice and sharing learning experiences more widely, again making more effective use of existing networks.
- There appears to be a perceived disconnect for authorities that are remote from the central belt. EHRC could consider methods of improving connections with these organisations, for example, by visiting them more regularly, or making better use of video conferencing and promoting virtual networks. This would help to ensure that authorities working in more remote areas could have greater access to a range of good practice.
- Performance measurement is a challenge, particularly for smaller organisations, for example, in relation to developing robust evidence bases and also selecting appropriate performance measures. This might be an area where tailored training, support and guidance would be beneficial in future.

## **Appendix One: Telephone interview discussion guide**

# **EHRC Improving Equality Outcomes Project**

## **Telephone Interview Discussion Guide**

### **Introduction**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in a follow-up telephone interview. This should take no more than 20 minutes.

I can confirm that anything that we report on the interview to the EHRC will not be attributed to you or your organisation. We will include unattributed quotes if this helps make the point.

### **The questionnaire**

We will follow up on some of the areas that were covered in the questionnaire, particularly if there was a limited response to some of the 'open' questions about the support provided by the EHRC.

### **The Equality Outcomes Project**

1. What one thing about the project had the greatest positive impact for you?
2. What one thing do you think that the EHRC could have done differently to have achieved greater impact from the project?

### **Impact**

3. What, if anything, changed for you as a result of the support?
4. What, if anything, changed for the organisation as a result of the support? For example:
  - is there a greater level of senior management ownership of the process of developing equality outcomes?
  - were there changes in the priority to equality outcomes within the organisation?
  - were wider stakeholders (such as service users and partners) more involved?
  - did you have better evidence to develop the equality outcomes?

### **Equality outcomes**

5. What are the main differences between the revised equality outcomes and the previous outcomes? For example:
  - is there a greater focus on outcomes rather than outputs?
  - are there fewer outcomes ... or more outcomes?
  - do the outcomes cover a larger number of protected groups?
  - is it clearer how you will measure progress against the outcomes?

### **Future support**

6. Think about all the public bodies that require to prepare and to report on equality outcomes. What could the EHRC do in future that would 'raise the game' in relation to the effectiveness of equality outcomes?

### **Anything else?**

7. That is all that we want to ask, is there anything else that you would like to add?

### **Thank you**

Thank you very much for taking part. Your comments and thoughts will feed into our report to the EHRC – unattributed of course. We report in March, and would expect that the EHRC will publish the report sometime in the late spring.

## **Appendix Two: Online survey**

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

EHRC has commissioned us – ODS Consulting – to evaluate the Improving Equality Outcomes Project. The evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of the project and the support provided by EHRC to selected public authorities. It will focus on the impact that this has had on confidence levels for participating public authorities and changes in the approaches and processes they used for reviewing equality outcomes by October 2014.

We are gathering views from participating authorities through this online survey. In addition, we will carry out a number of follow up telephone interviews with about 15 of the participating authorities.

We estimate that it will take 10 minutes to complete the survey.

If you have any questions about the research, please call Ann Elliott or Andrew Fyfe at ODS Consulting on 0141 424 3765.

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About You

**Your details**

Name: ( \_\_\_\_\_ )  
Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: ( \_\_\_\_\_ )  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Organisation: ( \_\_\_\_\_ )

**Organisation(s) for which you reviewed equality outcomes:**

1. | \_\_\_\_\_ |  
2. ----- 1





Impact of Support

What impact has the EHRC support had for the organisation developing revised outcomes?

	A lot	A little	Not at all	Not sure
Changing attitudes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strategic involvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Engagement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Joint work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please tell us a bit more about this?

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J

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## Confidence Levels

Has the support provided by EHRC since June 2104 helped to boost your confidence, when developing equality outcomes for your organisation?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Why is this?

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J

General

Do you have any other comments about the Improving Equality Outcomes Project?

J

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### Further Contact

Would you be happy to take part in a telephone interview to explore your views on the EHRC support programme in more detail? We expect that this would take about 20 minutes.