

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE
REMOVING BARRIERS: RACE, ETHNICITY AND EMPLOYMENT
SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

Setting the Scottish Borders Council context

2011 Population by Ethnic Group

	Scottish Borders		Scotland
	Number	Percent	Percent
All people	113870	100.00%	100.00%
White	112400	98.71%	96.02%
White: Scottish	89741	78.81%	83.95%
White: Other British	18624	16.36%	7.88%
White: Irish	767	0.67%	1.02%
White: Gypsy/Traveller	64	0.06%	0.08%
White: Polish	1302	1.14%	1.16%
White: Other White	1902	1.67%	1.93%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	316	0.28%	0.37%
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British	733	0.64%	2.66%
African	207	0.18%	0.56%
Caribbean or Black	91	0.08%	0.12%
Other ethnic groups	123	0.11%	0.27%

Source: 2011 Census

Traditionally the Scottish Borders has had a large white Scottish population but over recent years as indicated above we have seen the ethnic mix within the region continue to increase, but as the table shows this is low when compared to Scotland as a whole.

Here at Scottish Borders Council, our aim is to ensure that the Scottish Borders are a place where everyone matters, where everyone should have equal opportunities and where everyone should be treated with dignity and respect. As a council we want our services to be accessible to everyone irrespective of their age, disability, gender, race, national or ethnic origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

We will endeavour to ensure that our services meet the needs of everyone who lives, works or visits the Scottish Borders and we will continue to work with our communities to ensure we can achieve this.

Employment support and advice

- What provisions are in place to help people from ethnic minorities to access employment support and advice;

Our employment support service is open to all of our diverse communities so access therefore is, not specifically aimed at ethnic minorities. In addition we work in partnership with Job Centre Plus and a range of third sector organisations to ensure

all relevant members of our communities can gain access to 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

Whilst we are aware of the employment rates for many of our diverse communities however, we have no provision in place that is ethnic minority specific as our employment service is open to all of our diverse communities.

- 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?

We have not taken specific innovative approaches however our Employment Support Service has been designed to offer work opportunities, within SBC to improve the employment prospects of those furthest from the labour market. This includes those who define themselves as black and ethnic minority, young people, care leavers, people with mental health issues, those with disabilities or long term health conditions.

The service oversees the potential opportunities for both paid and unpaid work, within SBC for work experience and job taster sessions, work placements (including industrial/academic placements), apprenticeships and traineeships, seasonal employment opportunities, paid work, graduate opportunities and Internships. All of the above can be with or without support depending on what is appropriate.

Recruitment, retention and promotion

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

As part of our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 we gather and monitor our recruitment, retention and promotion data. Early indications show that there is no evidence to support this statement.

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

There are many barriers that lead to unequal outcomes within our Strategic Assessment 2014 publication we focus on economic, social or environmental factors. Provided below is the economic overview full details on the other two factors can be found in Scottish Borders Council Strategic Assessment 2014 published document. https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/download/1744/strategic_assessment

Economic Overview:

- The Scottish Borders continues to face significant challenges in terms of physical, digital and mobile connectivity.
- Compared with Scotland, the Scottish Borders has a higher proportion of employment in agriculture and fishing, and manufacturing but a lower

proportion of employment in banking, finance and insurance continuing to affect the GVA for the Scottish Borders.

- Overall there is a well-educated and skilled workforce in the Scottish Borders with a lower proportion of people of working age with low or no qualifications compared to Scotland.
- The 2013 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) indicated that both resident based and work place based earning in the Scottish Borders increased by over £50 per week. However, this increase does not seem to concur with local knowledge, previous years or the change in Scotland.

Economic Issues:

- The Economic downturn and the Welfare Reform Act have raised serious concern and challenges for those from the equality groups who make up many of those furthest away from work.
- The quality of digital connectivity (both mobile and broadband) in the Scottish Borders is inferior to the central belt and is a particular issue in rural areas.
- The proportion of employment land deemed immediately available for business use is a Scottish Local Authority Economic Development (SLAED) indicator. For 2012-13 Scottish Borders had 11.7% of its employment land immediately available compared to 19.6% for Scotland.
- The 11% retail vacancy rate for the Scottish Borders is similar to the level for Scotland; however there is a greater vacancy rate in Hawick (16%) and Galashiels (15%).
- The town centre footfall across the Borders major settlements decreased by 8% between 2012 and 2013.
- Visitor numbers and visitor spend in the Scottish Borders declined between 2011 and 2012.
- The Scottish Borders has generally had about 2 to 3 percent of the entire house building in Scotland. However there was a marked decrease in 2011-12 compared to previous years.

Promoting positive action

- What measures are being taken to tackle workplace discrimination and segregation;

Within SBC we have a published and monitored equality diversity and human rights policy. This policy sets out the Council's commitment to the principles, of equality, diversity and human rights in employment and sets out the approach to be followed in order to ensure that such principles are consistently met. The policy also sets out that where discrimination has been found to be evident this will not be tolerated and formal action will be taken under the Disciplinary Policy and this might lead to being dismissed from the Organisation. To support the policy a suite of elearning programmes have been developed and undertaking of the training is mandatory for all of SBC's employees.

Under the obligations of the Equality Act, we are soon to review our working practices to ensure that as well as Gender Occupational Segregation being addressed we will extend this to include race and disability. These two additional characteristics will also be included into our Equal Pay Policy and Statement. We

are in the early stages of monitoring our pay gap and occupational segregation and therefore gaining a better understanding of some of the required measures that may be needed. Our ultimate aim is not only to show our commitment to ensuring equal pay for our workforce but ensuring that as far as practicably possible our workforce receive equal pay for the same or broadly similar work, for work rated as equivalent, and for work of equal value.

- is there a need for a scheme that recognises positive action taken by employers (a “double tick” scheme for example)

We actively participate in the Job Centre two tick Scheme where we pride ourselves of the commitments we have signed up to within the Scheme. There may be some merit in introducing such a scheme for BME communities but serious thought would have to be given to such a Scheme in order for it to be viable for smaller organisations both in the size of its number of employees and the communities in which to draw from.

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

In 2012-2013 a complete review of two separate service orientated employment support services was undertaken and the Council endorsed a report that would bring these two services together to form a corporate service which would tackle and support the under- represented groups in the Borders. The redesign of the service is now fully complete with all staff now fully integrated in the service and focussed on delivery of efficient, high quality services.

A new Employability Fund contract has been secured.

A new Works Opportunity policy and procedures has been developed and endorsed by Corporate Management Team and additional resources have been directed to the service to enable its effective implementation.

Work continues to widen the scope and increase the capacity of the service to increase the number of those from under- represented groups to access and sustain employed employment.

Scottish Borders Council
July 2015