

Local Government and Communities Committee

City Region Deals

Submission from the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Scotland

The Equality & Human Rights Commission in Scotland (EHRC) is developing a programme of work to engage with Local Authorities and their partners on the City Deal investment programme for delivery in 2017 - 18.

The EHRC views the City Deal programme as a means of advancing equality of opportunity (the second aim of General Duty of the Equality Act 2010, and a statutory requirement on public bodies) particularly for women, for disabled people and for ethnic minorities.

The EHRC will deliver a targeted package of support the City Deals Partnerships (including the Ayrshire investment) to assist them in;

- Ensuring their plans pay *due regard* to the Equality Duty and maximise opportunities to advance equality of opportunity in employment, in housing, and in urban planning
- Providing expert advice to Partnerships on equality in procurement, harnessing the powers to set equality conditions in award criteria and contractual conditions, and
- Developing a measurement framework, based on the Ayrshire Inclusive Growth model, which enables partnerships to capture and reflect the equality gains they have made.

The work will be delivered where possible collectively across the City Deals encouraging sharing and innovation, but also in a bespoke manner to support local developments (for example in Stirling we have identified a desire to make coding labs less segregated by gender).

The work programme will last for this financial year and if successful will be further developed over time.

As an example of how the EHRC views the opportunity we have a strong interest in the Governments Affordable Housing Programme. Currently in Scotland we know that some 15, 000 wheelchair users are housed inappropriately. Similarly the EHRC is aware that ethnic minorities across Scotland are four times more likely to live in overcrowded homes. The construction of 50, 000 new affordable homes, if properly designed, could make a sizeable impact on both of these issues.

However, we also know that Scotland construction industry lacks diversity. Only 17% of employees in construction are female, and less than 2% are from ethnic minorities. Using public sector procurement to set targets for contractors on how they will attract and retain a more diverse work force would be central to making progress in this area. The EHRC is also intending to work with Skills Development Scotland to ensure that their Modern Apprenticeship programme training providers are equally

bound into ensuring equality returns in terms of more diverse apprenticeships entering relevant industries.

Across Scotland the City Deal programme has the potential to make an impact on construction, biopharma, creatives and ICT industries, tuned to local circumstances. As an example Glasgow based projects would have a particular focus on the employment of younger ethnic minority people who experience high levels of unemployment and low levels of entry and progression in key sectors of the economy, as ethnic minorities in Glasgow make around 15% of the target MA audience. In other areas local demography may determine a greater emphasis on gender or disability equality.

The EHRC intends to hold a framing event in September to bring together the various partners and set the scene for the programme. Following this the EHRC will provide a programme of generic and bespoke support to partners. The Ministers commitment to this work and his encouragement contained in the grant offer letters to City Deals Partnerships requiring them to work with the EHRC has been extremely helpful in brokering this relationship.

In the coming months the EHRC will continue to meet with City Deal Partnerships, with COSLA and other umbrella bodies to discuss how the programme could be best delivered, before designing and launching the programme in September.

Although this programme is framed around City Deals its principles are transferrable to all forms on investment.

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