1. Introduction to the Equality Evidence Strategy

The Scottish Government and its agencies collect, analyse and publish equality-relevant evidence across a wide range of policy areas. In order to make it easier for users to locate and access this information, the Scottish Government launched an Equality Evidence web resource in June 2012, which provides a wealth of data and other evidence with accompanying commentary, background papers, and links to further information.

The web resource has proved popular with users to date, but there has been some criticism that the Evidence Finder element, in particular, contains a number of gaps. There’s also been some internal discussion as to how the presentation of some material could be simplified, with a more easily understood ‘equality narrative’ developed for each area.

This paper therefore sets out a strategy, to be led by the Scottish Government’s Equality and Tackling Poverty Analysis Unit (E&TPAU), which will improve this web resource and, in so doing, develop the richness and usefulness of equality data in Scotland.

2. Scope of the Evidence Strategy

The strategy will be focused on improving the Equality Evidence web-resource that is already available.

The equality Evidence Finder overarching grid (illustrated overleaf) will remain as the main route for users to find the evidence they need. The data contained within these pages will continue to be updated by analysts in May and November each year.

The nine protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010 are all are included within the scope of the evidence strategy. At present, some characteristics are better populated than others. Reliable data on gender and age is available on a wide range of data sources and can often be presented at local level. However, information on disability can be more limited, and sourcing information on ethnicity, religion, transgender and sexual orientation is often not possible due to the small numbers which are involved. ‘Pregnancy and Maternity’ and ‘Marriage and Civil Partnership’ are treated slightly differently from the other characteristics and do not currently have individual columns on the Evidence Finder.

Fifteen policy areas are currently also set out in the Equality Evidence Finder and improving equality evidence for all of these will all be within the scope of the strategy. The strategy will seek to set out an approach to filling equality evidence gaps within this existing grid, although if stakeholders identify a new policy area or equality strand that is missing then the possibility of adding it should be explored.
3. Initial Discussions

The E&TPAU has already had initial exploratory discussions aimed at identifying key gaps in the evidence base. In September, an internal Review Team, including members of the Equality Unit, was set up to oversee and advise on this work. In October and November, E&TPAU met with a range of internal and external stakeholders to discuss current evidence gaps and to try to ascertain how these could be filled. Discussions have been held with academics, policy makers and third sector organisations, and covered many of the protected characteristics, although further discussions are still to be had and some equality areas are yet to be covered.

Stakeholder buy-in is crucial to the success of the strategy and advice from internal and external colleagues will be needed throughout the next year, as the strategy develops.
4. Filling Equality Evidence Gaps - Strategic Approach

There is a substantial amount of equality evidence available for Scotland and much of this can be disaggregated by a number of equality characteristics. This strategy will seek to ensure that best use is made of existing evidence before recommending new data collection or new research. Figure 1 overleaf sets out our approach to filling evidence gaps in order to ensure that the process is as cost effective as possible.

Priority should be placed on where data already exists but is not yet fully analysed or effectively disseminated. For example, there are a number of official datasets where equality information, due to limited resources, has not yet been analysed. The range of information that can be extracted from these datasets should be drawn out and made available where there is user need or policies and programmes to be evidenced.

Ways that existing evidence can be made better use of include -

- Increase the scope for disaggregation. For example, by pooling two or more years of a survey to increase sample size.
- Explore data matching or linkage between sources. The Scottish Government has recently published a strategy to build on successful data linkage programmes.¹

Data linkage has already been used effectively to improve the equality evidence base in Scotland, and an example of this is The Scottish Health and Ethnicity Linkage Study, which linked the Ethnic Code in the Scottish Census to NHS Data.

¹ See: Joined-up Data for Better Decisions: A strategy for improving data access and analysis. Also: Joined-up Data for Better Decisions: Guiding Principles for Data Linkage
Figure 1: Our approach to filling evidence gaps

The approach illustrated in Figure 1 above will be used over the next year to improve the Equality Evidence web resource.

Although the web resource is the strategy’s main focus, the strategy has a wider aim of supporting and encouraging Scottish Government directorates and agencies to publish more equality-disaggregated data. Making the most of the data and other evidence collected is the key overarching goal.

The next section of the Equality Evidence Strategy will focus on the following areas of activity:

- Prioritising key gaps, with advice from users and stakeholders
- Filling key gaps:
  - New analysis of Scottish Government data / other evidence (e.g. forthcoming 2011 Census data)
  - Enhancing the value of existing Scottish Government data (e.g. by linking data across different years of a survey to create a sufficiently large sample to report on)
External analysis (e.g. good quality evidence not collected or commissioned by Scottish Government or its agencies)

Where no existing evidence/data exists, consideration will be given to filling gaps via new data collection.

- Presenting existing evidence in a more immediately accessible way, seeking to put figures into context and providing informative commentary where possible.
- Other improvements, including making EQIAs and other relevant material a component part of the web resource.

5. Filling gaps via emerging Scottish Government data / other evidence

New data can of course help fill gaps, and new harmonised, core questions on equality characteristics is helping improve Scottish Government equality data. Every new statistical release, therefore, offers at least the potential for equality disaggregation that has not been previously possible – even if ultimately for some characteristics numbers remain too small to undertake new analysis now.

Some major new datasets offer significant potential for improving equality reporting. For example, the 2011 Census data will be analysed by equality characteristic and reports will be produced for these. A [census outputs prospectus](#) has been published by NRS and this indicates that most equality tables will be published from the summer of 2013. This analysis will therefore take place in the second half of 2013.

The Census data should also be utilised for analysis on intersectionality. Intersectionality concerns equality groups with two or more protected characteristics. Early discussions with stakeholders revealed that more data and analysis on Intersectionality would fill important evidence gaps. This would include, for example, barriers to employment for Asian women.

New evidence can also be identified via secondary research. As part of work on setting equality outcomes, for example, the Scottish Government has compiled evidence reviews on a number of the protected characteristics. These evidence reviews will be published on the Scottish Government’s website by the end of April 2013.

6. Enhancing the value of existing data collected by Scottish Government and its agencies

The Scottish Government and its agencies already collect a wide range of data and other evidence, and a key element of the Equality Evidence Strategy is making more of what already exists. For example, work has begun on breaking the Scottish Government’s National Indicators down by equality characteristic where this is possible. This work will provide evidence on whether or not protected equality groups are making progress towards National Outcomes at the same rate as other
groups. Results of further statistical analysis of equality groups will be made available on the Evidence Finder throughout 2013.

A specific example where existing data can be more productively used relates to Gypsies/Travellers. Following the Equal Opportunities Committee’s recent report on Gypsy/Travellers and Care, the Scottish Government has begun to review the evidence base for Gypsies/Travellers. This has included an exploration of information that can be obtained from existing administrative sources since the adoption of the new Ethnic Group question which separately identifies Gypsy / Traveller as its own ethnic group. Information available from the 2011 Census and Scottish Housing Regulator will also be taken into consideration. This review will assess the evidence available on provision and access to services and identify gaps. A summary paper will be produced by March 2013.

At a local level, the information from pooled samples will lead to improvements in data for many groups in some areas and where possible disaggregated data will be published on the Evidence Finder where there is demand from users.

A number of organisations across the public sector produce equality evidence. The NHS’s Review of equality health data needs in Scotland aimed to detail the current availability of equality health data in Scotland for routinely collected data sources, assess equality data needs and identify national priorities for data development. In the case of health, understanding the characteristics of an individual can help to improve individual care at the point of service delivery. Such reviews and evidence across policy areas should be signposted by the Evidence Finder.

7. Filling gaps via external analysis

It was evident from our early discussions with stakeholders that a wealth of existing equality evidence already exists, covering a wide range of characteristics and policy areas, which could in theory fill many of the gaps on the Evidence Finder. Some useful evidence is already available on organisations’ websites.

At present, the Equality Evidence Finder largely presents information produced directly or commissioned by Government. Our stakeholders have suggested that the evidence base would be enhanced by linking to both Government and other organisations’ relevant work across the protected characteristics.

In order to fill gaps on the Evidence Finder, particularly for protected characteristics where there are small numbers and limited quantitative evidence, processes should be developed to allow links to external research carried out by universities, third sector and other equality representation groups. Links to such research will fill gaps, supplement statistics, and enhance the evidence base. A process to allow this should be in place by the end of March 2013.
8. Filling gaps via new data collection or research

If an evidence gap was identified which was considered high priority and could not be filled using any of the aforementioned methods then E&TPAU should consider commissioning a new data collection or new piece of research. Any new information should lead to a clear positive impact on one or more equality group and the benefits of the evidence should clearly outweigh the cost of collecting it.

9. Presenting existing evidence in a more immediately accessible way

The improvement of the presentation of statistics on the Evidence Finder is a key aim of the strategy. The Evidence Finder should meet the needs of its users by presenting the information in as accessible and user friendly a format as possible. Effort should be made to interpret the statistics for users and provide context and commentary, in line with the principles of the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice

Scottish Government analysts, who provide the material for the Evidence Finder, will be provided with guidance to help improve the context and visual representation of the data. An ‘Exemplar’ page or pages should be developed and promoted as good practice.

The information presented on the evidence finder should be as accessible as possible – equality evidence should be accessible to all protected equality groups. Consideration should be given to this when presenting the evidence on the internet.

Early discussions with stakeholders have revealed that many are unaware of the range of equality evidence that exists. The Evidence Finder will be promoted as widely as possible to policy makers across Scotland. Scotstat should continue to be the main forum to disseminate statistics and information on new developments. However, an additional contacts list of academics, equality groups and third sector organisations will also be developed by E&TPAU and used to disseminate information.

10. Other improvements

Work is already underway to link to published EQIAs from the Equality Evidence Finder and to ensure that visitors to the Evidence Finder are directed to the most up-to-date guidance. There will be an EQIA section within the Evidence Finder by the end of March 2013.

Analytical colleagues across the Scottish Government (through the Equality Analysts Network) and other public bodies should help to ensure that the Evidence Finder is as complete as possible and reflects work taking place across the public sector. An example of this would be ensuring signposting to reports such as Improving ethnic data collection for equality and diversity monitoring.
A desk review to gather relevant literature that has been published to date should be carried out to ensure that any duplication is minimised. It will be important there is a dovetailing and not a duplication of work taking place by other bodies around equality evidence.

Other work to consider presenting on the Evidence Finder should include using a range of other analytical material – e.g. research by stakeholder groups, published work in academic journals, unpublished PhD theses and other grey literature – that have previously not been used on the website.

Where appropriate the Evidence Finder should direct users to online analytical tools, for example NOMIS, to enable users to directly access the information they require themselves and analyse by equality group.

E&TPAU will continue to engage with the Beyond 2011 programme and will consider how to fill future equality evidence gaps should the Census be replaced in the longer term by alternative sources.

The most effective way to further engage experts and experts groups will be considered and put into practice. Scotland has a wealth of specialists, including a strong academic community. E&TPAU will lead on further discussions with internal and external stakeholders in 2013 and will implement improvements to the evidence base throughout the year.

11. Timeline

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<tr>
<td>Desk review of existing research</td>
<td>Add links to research from government and non-government organisations</td>
<td>Continued engagement with stakeholders</td>
<td>Analyse and Enhance Existing Survey and Admin Data</td>
<td>Analyse Census Data</td>
<td>Publish themed papers on Census data</td>
<td>Review Evidence Strategy</td>
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The Strategy will be reviewed and updated in January 2014.

Equality and Tackling Poverty Analysis
Scottish Government
20th December 2012