

# Highland Council Race Equality Scheme 2005 - 2008



## Summary

**“The Highland Council is opposed to racism. It is committed to working towards the elimination of discrimination and to promoting racial equality. The Council will do this by fulfilling its legal duties as a public authority service provider and employer and by working in partnership with other local agencies and community organisations”.**

*Highland Council Policy Statement*

The Highland Council aims to create sustainable communities with more balanced population growth and economic development across the Highlands and to build a fairer and healthier Highlands. We are committed to fulfil our duties to promote equality and to tackle discrimination and disadvantage – in employment, public services, community leadership and partnership working.

### **Background – changing legislation**

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (The Act) introduced a new General Duty on public bodies when carrying out their functions to give due regard to:

- eliminating unlawful discrimination;
- promoting equality of opportunity and
- promoting good relations between persons of different racial groups

Local authorities and other public bodies are required to publish a Race Equality Scheme which should be reviewed every three years. Following a review in November 2008, the Highland Council’s Race Equality Scheme 2008 – 2011 has been updated and allows the Council to publicly reaffirm its commitment to promoting racial equality and combating discrimination.

### **What is a Race Equality Scheme?**

A Race Equality Scheme sets out how a public body will meet the duty above by showing how it will:

- assess which policies and functions are relevant to race equality
- assess and consult on policies they are proposing to introduce
- monitor relevant policies to see how they affect race equality
- publish the results of assessments, consultation and monitoring
- ensure public access to information and services which it provides
- train staff in connection with the duties

There are also specific duties which cover Employment and Education.

### **What does this mean for public bodies?**

The duties aim to positively promote race equality in all areas of the public sector. The General Duty is not optional and public bodies, including all local authorities, have to meet it even in areas where minority ethnic populations

are small. Racism and discriminatory behaviour is as much an issue in rural areas as in urban areas, and is unacceptable wherever it occurs.

The new Equality and Human Rights Commission has powers of enforcement under the Act to ensure compliance with the duties.

### **What does this mean for our communities?**

The purpose of a race equality scheme is to ensure that we are doing all we can to promote race equality and make sure we do not treat people unfairly because on racial grounds or because of their ethnic background. This would include migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees and Gypsy/Travellers.

### **Meeting the challenges of the Race Equality Scheme**

The Highland Council welcomes the duties of The Act as a means to embed equality in all our activities and plan services in ways to meet the needs of all communities. Our revised Race Equality Scheme is set in the context of changing demographics and economic circumstances, and an increasingly diverse population.

Implementing the Race Equality Scheme will help the Council to:

- Improve information about the diversity of our communities and identify the particular needs of groups and individuals.
- Consider equality in the Council's decision making and policy development
- State our commitment to tackling discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity
- Engage with communities to identify effective ways to deliver services to our communities

The Council is actively involved with local partners and communities to promote race equality and improve access to services. We plan to build on these relationships to improve race equality work in the Highlands for the future.

### **Contact details:**

If you would like:

- a full copy of the Highland Council Race Equality Scheme,
- to comment on the Scheme, or
- to request this summary in an alternative format or language

please contact:

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