

Equalities Status Report April 2013

Introduction

Royal Blind Group, comprising Royal Blind and Scottish War Blinded, is an organisation that promotes the inclusion and empowerment of people with visual impairments, and as such regards equality in all its respects as something that should be inherent in our service delivery, our staffing and our management and governance.

The establishment of Specific Duties under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations in relation to the Board's role as the manager of the Royal Blind School, a grant aided school, provides a framework for the setting and monitoring of formal aspirations for the continual improvement of our performance in attaining equality in our employment practice.

These reports are written so as to transparently fulfil our obligations under the Regulations. They also serve the function of monitoring, managing and improving our equalities performance across our whole organisation.

This report is a compilation of the following:

1. The first report on progress in making the equality duty integral to our functions, or, in the terms of the regulations, "mainstreaming" the equality duty in the organisation.
2. A report of our aspirations for the outcomes we would like to achieve so that we can perform our equality duty better.
3. A brief report of the results of our assessment of the impact of the policies and practices on equality we have decided to apply.
4. A report on the composition of our workforce in the Royal Blind School and in the organisation at large in respect of the various protected characteristics, at the commencement of our new policies and practices.
5. A report on the gender pay gap in the Royal Blind School and in the organisation at large.
6. Our policies on equal pay and occupational segregation.

Progress in making the equality duty integral to our functions

In these initial stages of implementation our foremost aims are to:

- Gather, assess and use employee data
- Assess and review our policies and practices

The first stage, the gathering of employee data, has been completed. The resultant information on the present make-up of our workforce is reported in a later section. A system has been set up and through it we have begun to gather data on recruitment development and retention to inform later reports.

Our Equality and Diversity Policy is as follows

“Royal Blind strives to create a productive environment which is representative of and responsive to different cultures and groups, and where everyone has an equal chance to succeed. In order to do this Royal Blind will provide equal opportunity in the fields of recruitment, training and promotion. All decisions in these areas will be made with regard only to the requirements of the job and shall not otherwise be influenced by any considerations of age, sex, trans-gender status, marital status, race, disability, political or religious belief or sexuality.

“Royal Blind has a responsibility to embrace and support equality and diversity and to challenge behaviour and attitudes that prevent this achievement. Using fair and objective employment practices Royal Blind’s aim is to ensure that:

- All employees and potential employees are treated fairly and with respect at all stages of their employment.
- All employees have the right to be free from harassment and bullying of any description, or any other form of unwanted behaviour, whether based on age, sex, trans-gender status, marital status, race, disability, political or religious belief or sexuality”

Our policies and practices are reviewed for their impact on equalities before being finalised and issued. Our present policies include the following measures aimed at promoting equal treatment across some or all of the protected categories:

- Our management guideline, which sets out our general expectations of all managers in the organisation, includes the following explicit expectations:
 - Show integrity, fairness and consistency in decision making
 - Ensure you and your team comply with legal requirements and regulations
 - Treat individuals with respect and act to uphold their rights
 - Recognise the opportunities presented by diversity of people
 - Recognise when there are conflicts between team members, acknowledge the feelings and views of all parties
 - Use leadership styles that are appropriate to different people and situations
 - Show sensitivity to team members’ needs and interests
 - Seek to understand people’s needs and motivation
 - Show empathy with team members’ needs, feelings and motivations and take an active interest in their concerns
- Our absence policy includes the following: “It may be necessary for the Occupational Health Practitioner to contact the employee’s GP to obtain a medical opinion from someone with more knowledge of the case. This would only be done with the employee’s consent and in line with the Access to Medical Records Act. From this information further support should be considered along with any extra

obligations that Royal Blind may have under the Equality Act 2010 and subsequent regulations.

- Our policy on the use of email and the internet prohibits unacceptable content, including but not limited to, sexually explicit messages, images, cartoons, or jokes, unwelcome propositions or any other content which is designed to cause or likely to cause harassment or provocation of any other person or organisation based on sex, sexual orientation, age, race, national origin, disability, religious or political belief.
- Our Dignity at Work Policy was revised in January 2013 and is written in full conformity with the Equalities Act duties.
- Our employee exit questionnaire includes the following question, alongside a number of others about the quality of the working experience: "Have you experienced discrimination, harassment or hostile working conditions?"
- Our policies are available to all staff on an intranet. Our induction procedure for all staff requires that they be informed of the existence and location of all policies, procedures and rules, including those concerning equalities. Key points within these policies are to be highlighted.
- Our recruitment policy includes the following: "In the event of an unsuccessful application, before interview, the recruiting Line Manager notes the reasons for non-selection on the application documents and returns to the HR department. Please ensure that all interview comments are recorded and are factual, objective and non-discriminatory as they may be open to external scrutiny. Rejection decisions should be based on perceived lack of capability due to inexperience, inadequate qualifications etc. and not on criteria related to sex, race, TU membership, sexual orientation, disability or age.

All those involved in selection decisions should be appropriately skilled and trained in selection interviewing, and be fully aware of their responsibilities under relevant Organisation policies and legislation. All processes used will be reviewed and validated regularly by the HR department to ensure they are fair and reliable.

- Human Resources Dept supervise all recruitment interviews and disciplinary hearings to ensure that none are tainted by discriminatory practice, however subtle.
- Our comprehensive social media policy refers to and extends our equalities and dignity policies to all social media activity by our staff.
- Our Volunteers Policy requires that all volunteer opportunities are offered in accordance with Royal Blind's Equality and Diversity Policy.
- Our Board reviews its composition annually and concludes each time on its preferences in terms of skill gaps it needs to fill and also in order to attain a balance of gender, ethnicity, and experience of visual impairment.

Our aspirations for the outcomes we would like to achieve

Our vision at Royal Blind is to make a significant contribution to building a community in which blind and partially sighted people, including those who also have other disabilities, are fully included and lead fulfilling lives.

We work towards fulfilling this vision, empowering blind people to achieve their potential and a brighter future.

We identify strongly with the aim of eliminating any disadvantage to people with the protected characteristics in the Equalities Act: Age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships.

We would like to be more diverse than we are at present, particularly in terms of ethnicity.

We would like to see more disabled people involved on our staff beyond the Scottish Braille Press, which exists partly to provide employment for those with visual and other impairments and therefore employs many in these categories.

We aim to move gradually towards having a more ethnically diverse Board with a more even gender balance.

We are currently considering adopting the two-tick symbol “Positive about disabled people” in our recruitment practice, and applying for Investors in People status.

The impact of the policies and practices on equality we have decided to apply

Under these policies we are taking proactive and organised steps to tackle “institutional discrimination”, building upon the good practice that we have built up over many years’ careful good practice that has been informed by forerunner legislation. It is already unlikely that any overt and clearly intentional discrimination would arise under our previous policies, but with these further initiatives wish to change unlikely to extremely rare and go further to minimise the incidence of unintentionally discriminatory practice, and to ensure that there is the maximum possibility of such discriminatory activity being identified and effectively addressed.

Our aims are to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other prohibited practices.
- Promote equality of opportunity for all by removing or minimising disadvantage suffered due to protected characteristics
- Encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in activities where their participation is disproportionately low
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

All employees should be aware of their general equality duty requirements.

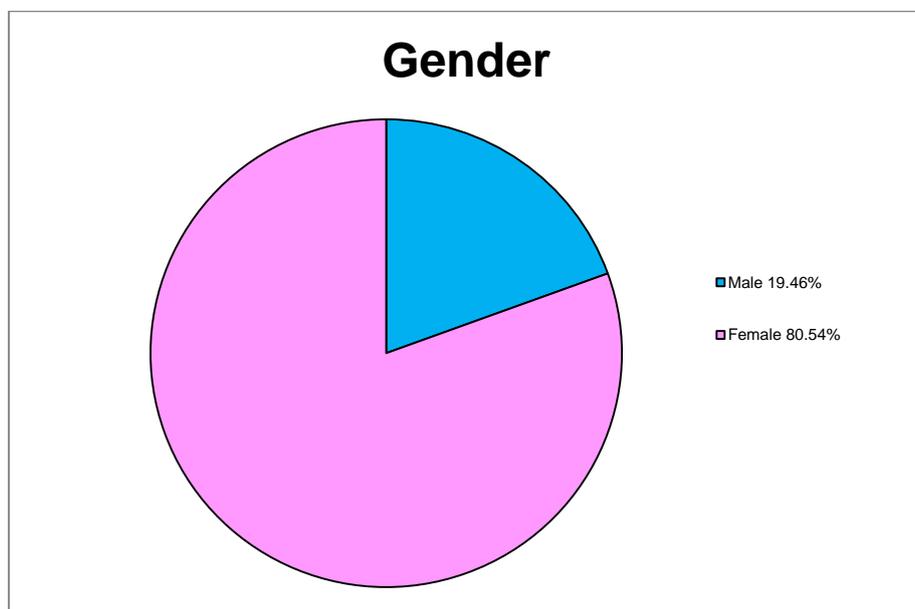
Whenever reviewing a policy with personnel implications we consider equalities implications.

Our decision-making processes centre on our detailed Business Plan. All future business plans will be reviewed for any possible negative impact on protected groups.

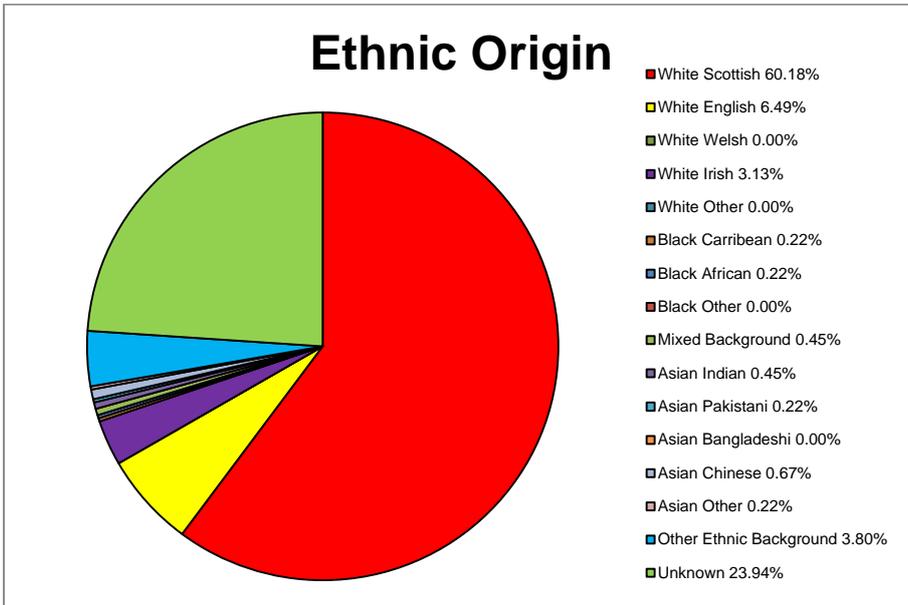
As a result of implementation we will have awareness of equalities issues fully instilled in all the following parts of our governance and management functions:

- **Board Members** – in how they ensure good governance and comply as a group with the policy
- **Senior Manager** – in how they oversee the design, delivery, quality and effectiveness of our functions.
- **Human Resources** – in how they build equality considerations into employment policies and procedures
- **Frontline Staff** – in how they meet the needs of the people from protected groups including the teaching of the principles of equality
- **Communications Staff** – in how they ensure relevant equality information is available and accessible
- **Procurement Staff** – in how they build equality considerations into the organisation’s relationship with suppliers

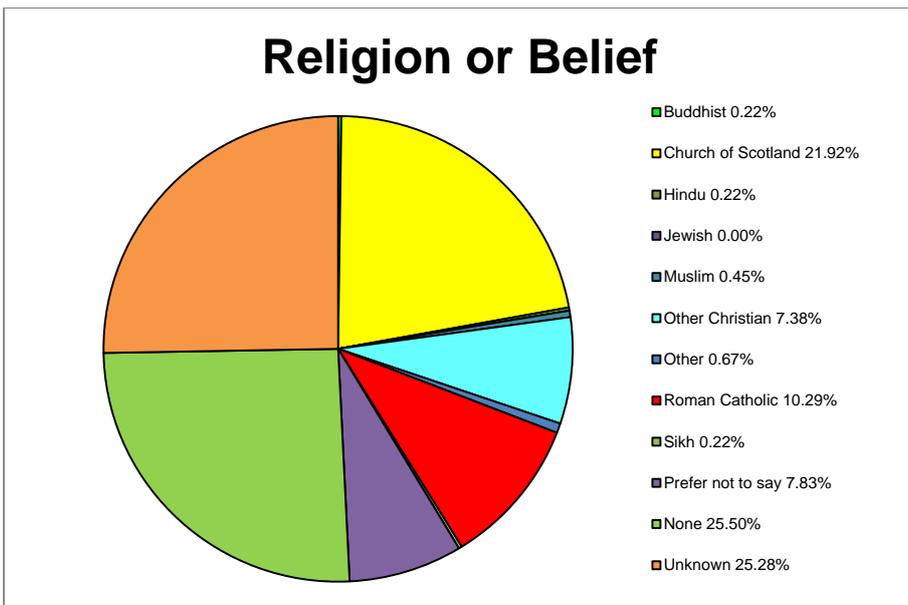
The composition of our workforce: Whole organisation



We believe that this gender mix reflects the typical mix in the activities we operate, which are mostly in the care and education sectors.

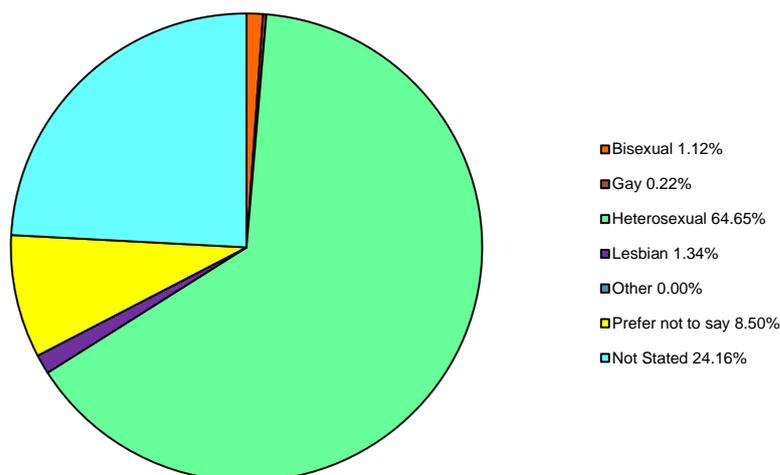


We are pleased to have good representation of minority ethnic groups among our staff. A large “unknown” portion hampers fully reliable analysis, and hopefully as people become more used to, and trusting of, equalities monitoring they will become more forthcoming in response to requests for this information.



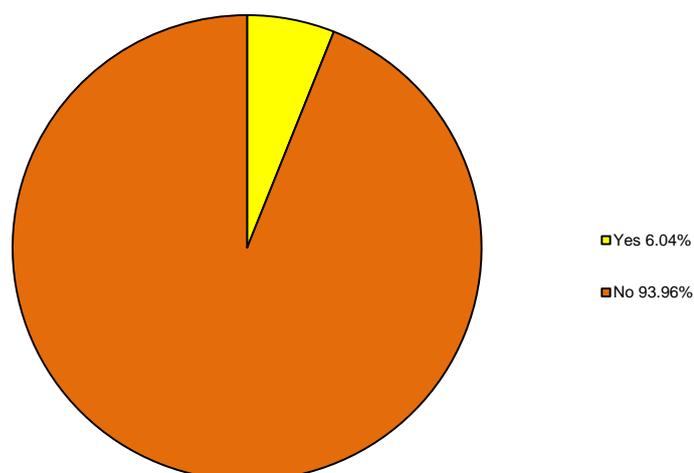
No single religious affiliation strongly dominates our staffing, the largest declared group being “none” at only just over 25% of the total.

Sexual Orientation



We believe that there is a natural tendency not to declare minority sexual orientation, and around a third of staff are in the “prefer not to say” or “not stated” categories. This makes it hard to draw a conclusion from the figures, but as with other questions it may be that disclosure becomes more the norm in future.

Disabilities

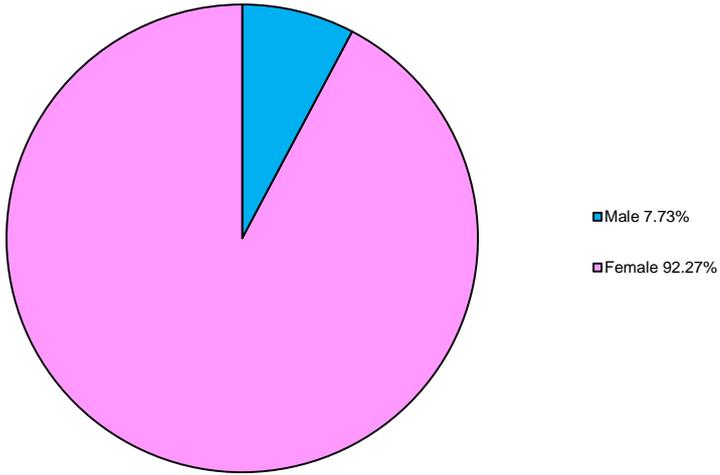


We believe our performance in employing people with disabilities is reasonably strong, but it will be our intention to increase the proportion further in the next few years.

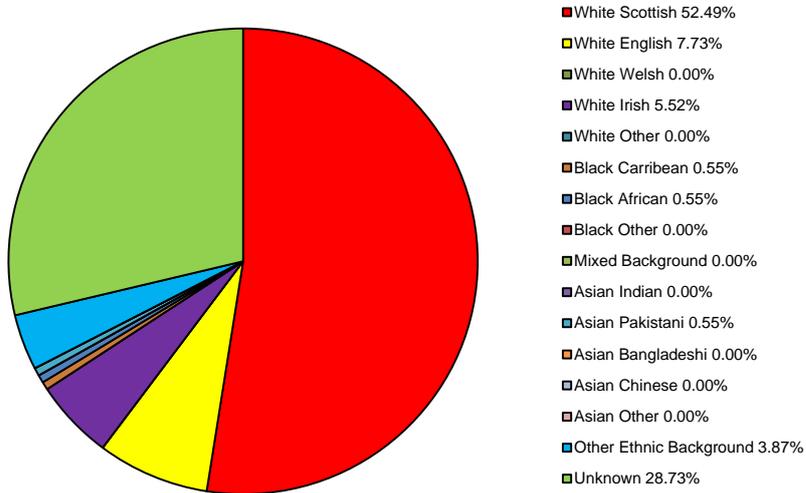
The composition of our workforce: Royal Blind School

Separate disclosures are made below about the school, in order to meet the regulatory requirement. The school is operated under the same human resources policy and practice as the rest of the group, and is the biggest part of the organisation, and so the influences on the figures are similar.

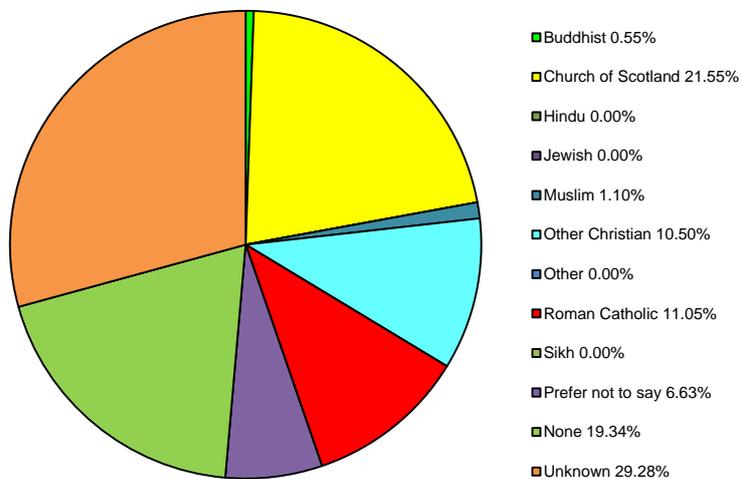
Gender



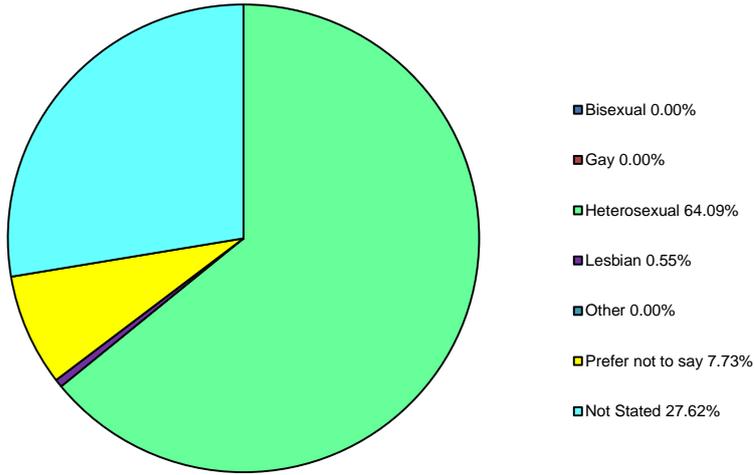
Ethnic Origin



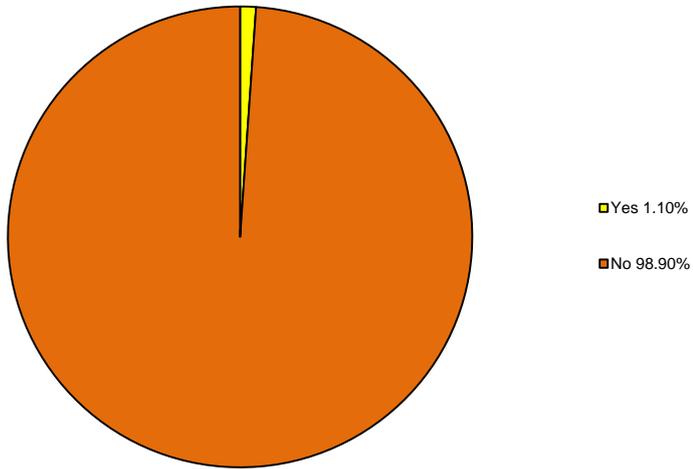
Religion or Belief



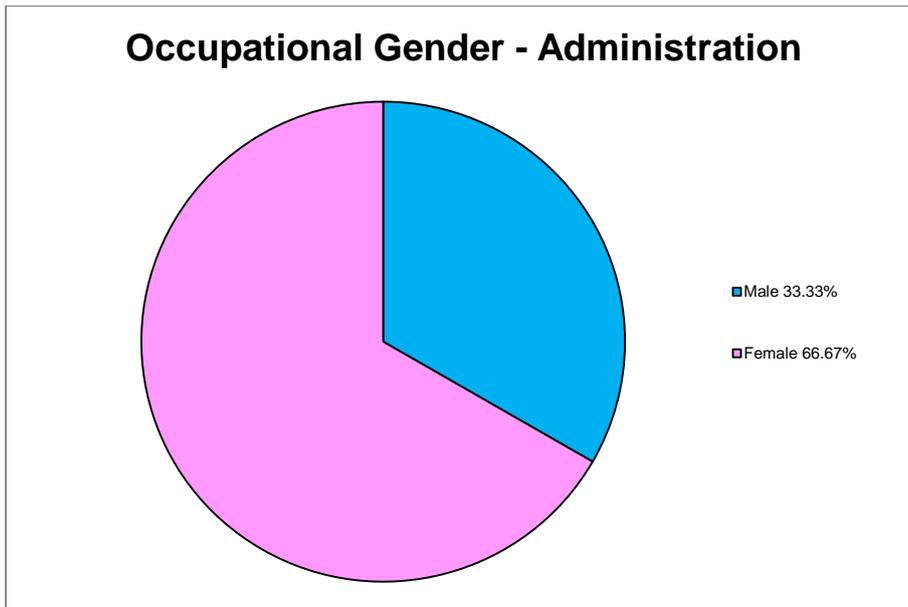
Sexual Orientation



Disabilities

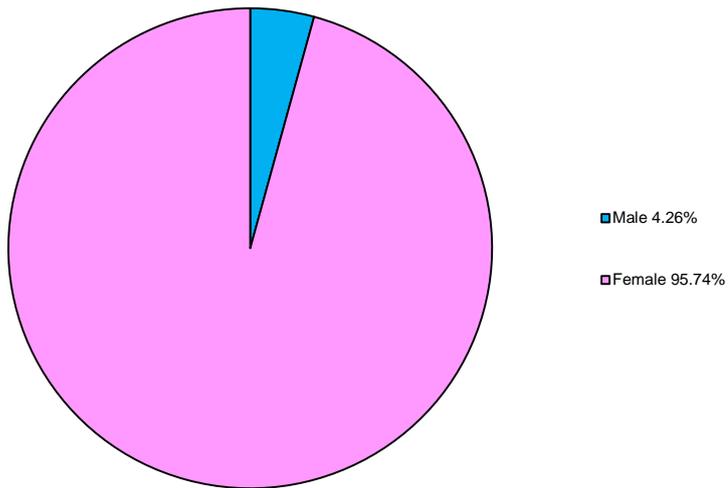


The composition of our group workforce: Occupational segregation



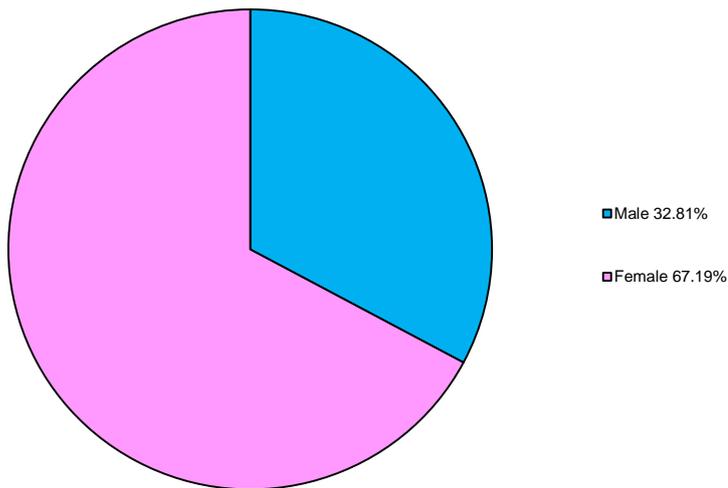
Our care services are predominantly supporting children, young adults and older people, and the gender mix reflects the norms for these sectors.

Occupational Gender - Classroom Staff



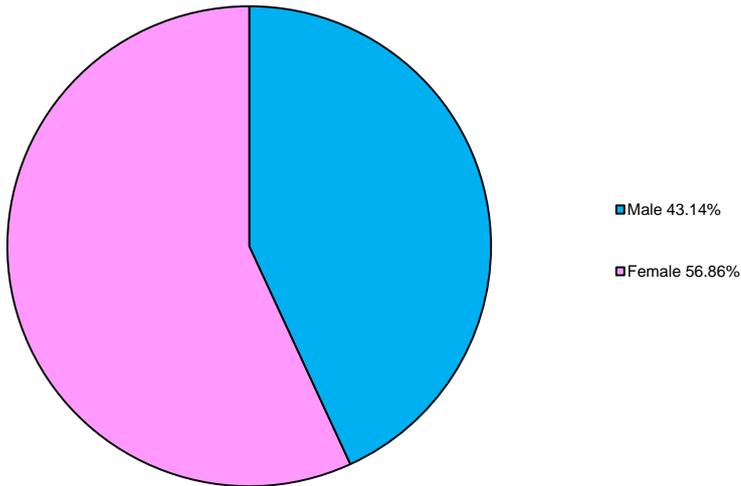
The category “classroom staff” includes classroom assistants and nursery nurses, but not teachers, who are placed in a separate category below.

Occupational Gender - Facilities



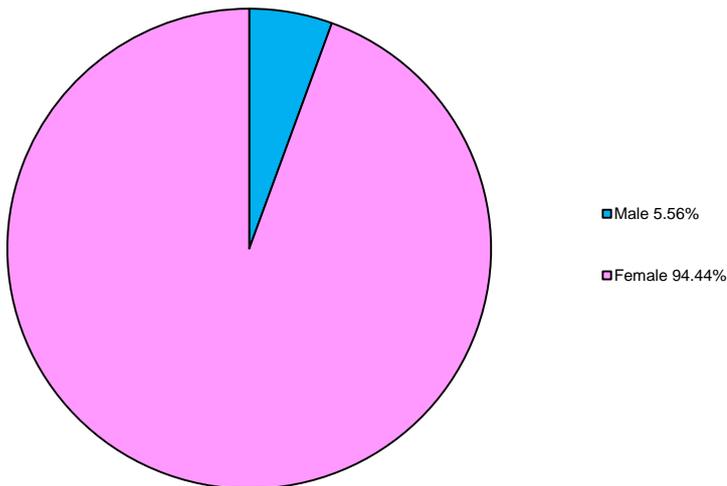
This category includes domestic, catering and maintenance staff.

Occupational Gender - Production



Most people in this category work in the Scottish Braille Press.

Occupational Gender - Teachers



We have many more female than male teachers, reflecting the tendency of male teachers to be concentrated in subject teaching in mainstream state and independent secondary education. Applications from males are encouraged, as it brings a balance of role models to our pupils.

The General Teaching Council for Scotland shows 77% of teachers on their register as at 1st May 2013 are female.

Our gender pay gap: Whole organisation

Our 87 male staff are paid on average £11.59 an hour

Our 360 female staff are paid on average £11.81 an hour

Our female staff are thus paid on average more than the men, but by less than 2%. We conclude from this that the statistic does not give cause for concern.

Our gender pay gap: Royal Blind School

Our 14 male staff are paid on average £12.71 an hour

Our 167 female staff are paid on average £12.87 an hour

Our female staff are thus paid on average more than the men, but by less than 1.5%. We conclude from this that the statistic does not give cause for concern.

Policy on Equal Pay

We operate a payscale system which ensures that the salary and conditions for each job relate to the title and description of that job and not to any characteristic of the person carrying it out.

There are no pay entitlements which benefit or disadvantage a protected group.

We therefore believe that any pay gap will arise purely from differing proportions of male and female staff, disabled and non-disabled staff and persons in various racial groups in the various jobs we have.

Policy on Occupational Segregation

We recruit without gender preference, from which we occasionally make an exception only in certain care related roles, where good practice requires that we try to avoid having single-sex teams. Other than this, we apply no specific segregation of job roles on any grounds.

Our job descriptions and titles are non-gender-specific, with the sole exceptions of Chairman and Vice-Chairman, which are fixed in our constitution of 1896 and are voluntary positions to which we appoint women as well as men, and Matron and Deputy Matron of our Care Home, which titles will remain in use only for the tenure of the first of the present postholders to leave the post, after which they will be changed.

Further implementation and monitoring stages

We will publish a similar report to this one in April 2015, to indicate the continuing progress we will have made to make the equality duty integral to our work, the progress made towards achieving our equality outcomes and the updated gender pay gap.

During 2014, to inform the 2015 report and subsequent reports, and to review future changes to policy and practice, we will invite staff from ethnic minorities, staff with under-represented genders and with minority sexual orientation and religions to form a reference panel to assess our policies, progress and equality aims and bring forward ideas.

A further report will be produced in April 2017, which will include everything in the 2015 report and also include refreshed aspirations for the outcomes of our initiatives on equality and a revised or re-affirmed statement on equal pay.

Richard Hellewell
Chief Executive