

Equality Monitoring Form Guidance

As of 1 April 2021, the Equality Monitoring Form now includes a question on gender (moved from registration paperwork) and a minor amendment to the disability categories.

This guidance was updated in June 2020 to reflect alternative process that some providers may be using as a result of government guidance in response to Covid-19 (page 3), and to provide clarity on the paperwork required for any changes to FIPS.

The guidance below outlines the process for collecting equality information, what we use it for and highlights good practice to help participants feel comfortable disclosing their information to us.

Process

Both the registration paperwork (e.g. Training Agreement, Registration Form) and the Equality Monitoring Form should be completed at the same time. The information collected from the Equality Monitoring Form should then be input to FIPS. A new participant cannot be registered on FIPS without this information.

As outlined on the Equality Monitoring Form, you should ask participants to sign Section B to demonstrate that they have been made aware of the privacy notice. **Section B should be retained by the training provider and produced for inspection if required.**

Section A should be completed by the participant. Please refer to the guidance below should they have any questions about why this data is collected or what it is used for. **Section A should be securely destroyed once the information has been entered into FIPS.**

The registration paperwork (e.g. Training Agreement) is a separate document. You should retain a copy of the signed registration paperwork.

Information provided on the Equality Monitoring Form should always be on the basis of self-disclosure from the participant. Assumptions should not be made about which category participants fit into. This information should be entered into FIPS on the basis of the completed Equality Monitoring Form.

Updating equality data on FIPS

Sometimes a participant might disclose equality information to you at a later date, after their form has been entered into FIPS. This data can be updated on FIPS but only if the individual consents to this and is made aware of SDS Privacy Statement (Section B). To update equality data on FIPS, participants and providers should retain confirmation from the participant that they consent to a change being made to their equality data (this should include the date of the consent). You should not record details of the question or the response, just confirmation that a change has been made to the equality data. This could be recorded as part of a progress review, confirmed via email or a written update, including signature and date, on Section B of the form. This should be retained for audit purposes in line with the usual process.

Why do we ask for equality information?

Skills Development Scotland has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure our services are inclusive and can be accessed by a diverse range of individuals. We also have a duty under the Children and Young Persons Act to ensure we are supporting care experienced young people.

As part of these duties, we monitor uptake of our services so that we can identify and address any areas of under-representation of particular groups. For example, if our data showed that there were very few disabled people accessing our programmes then we can take steps to try to address this.

Encouraging disclosure

The Equality Monitoring Form is mandatory and must be completed by all participants. Participants have the option to select 'Prefer Not to Say' if they do not wish to disclose their equality information, however it is important for us to understand who is using our services. It is ultimately beneficial to our customers that we can identify any groups that are under-represented or face additional barriers to accessing our services so that we can take steps to improve access to our programmes. There are some steps that you can take to ensure participants feel comfortable disclosing their equality information:

- Ensure staff involved in collecting and inputting equality data understand why SDS requests this information so that they can explain this to participants if asked.
- Ensure that people feel that they are in a safe and non-intimidating environment where they will not be interrupted. For example, completing the form in a group situation would not be appropriate.
- To encourage participants to complete the form accurately it should be done in a private space ensuring confidentiality of the information. Ideally, in a 1:1 situation with a trainer that they have already met. This also gives them the opportunity to ask questions and/or disclose any of the information to their trainer, enabling you to discuss any support needs that they may have.
- You should make it very clear that you and your organisation understand the information is personal and sensitive and that it will be treated confidentially, and will not be shared with other participants or employers.
- You should make it clear that the information is anonymised and used for reporting purposes only
- You should explain that the purpose is to ensure all groups have equal access to the programme.
- When a participant does not disclose at the beginning of their programme but feels more able to do so later on, it is very important that you update FIPS (please follow guidance above on making changes to FIPS).

Further information

If you have any questions regarding equality monitoring or would like to speak to someone about encouraging a more diverse range of individuals onto the programme, please contact equality.apprenticeships@sds.co.uk and one of our team will discuss this with you.

If you have any queries about FIPS, please use the [FIPS Customer Support Request Form](#).

Alternative Process (Covid-19)

In exceptional circumstances, you may need to collect equality monitoring information by email or phone, or by reading the questions to the participant. You should continue to follow good practice to encourage disclosure and to ensure the security of the data.

Collecting equality data by email

As an interim measure during the response to Covid-19, providers who are unable to collect signatures from participants can do so via email. Interim guidance on what constitutes an acceptable alternative to a signature can be found on the [SDS website](#).

Providers are responsible for ensuring the information is handled sensitively and securely, and should follow SDS guidance on sending and receiving encrypted data. Data should be password protected and the password should be sent by a different channel than the form itself (for example, emailing the form and texting the password).

Where you are unable to collect a signature in person, you should follow the [interim Covid guidance](#) from SDS which explains acceptable alternatives. Providers must follow this guidance to ensure they have an appropriate confirmation from the participant for audit purposes. If you are not completing the form in person, it is good practice to provide the participant with the details of someone that they can contact if they have any questions or are having difficulty completing the form.

Providers should destroy the information securely once it has been entered into FIPS, retaining section B for audit purposes.

Collecting equality data verbally/by phone

There may be instances where you are required to read the equality monitoring form to a candidate, or to ask for this information over the phone. You should be mindful that this data is personal and can be sensitive for some people to discuss.

To encourage disclosure, it is important that the individual understands why you are asking the questions and what the information will be used for. Before asking the questions, you should explain that:

- You are about to ask some questions for equality monitoring purposes
- The information is held securely and confidentially
- The data is anonymised and is only used for reporting purposes
- SDS uses equality monitoring data to understand who is accessing their programmes so that they can put in place support for groups who are under-represented to help them have equal access to opportunities
- Every question has a 'Prefer Not to Say' option
- The privacy notice can be found on [the SDS website](#)

Where you are unable to collect a signature in person, you should follow the [interim Covid guidance](#) from SDS which explains acceptable alternatives. Providers must follow this guidance to ensure they have an appropriate confirmation from the participant for audit purposes. If you are not completing the form in person, it is good practice to provide the participant with the details of someone that they can contact if they have any questions or are having difficulty completing the form.

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